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ROYAL

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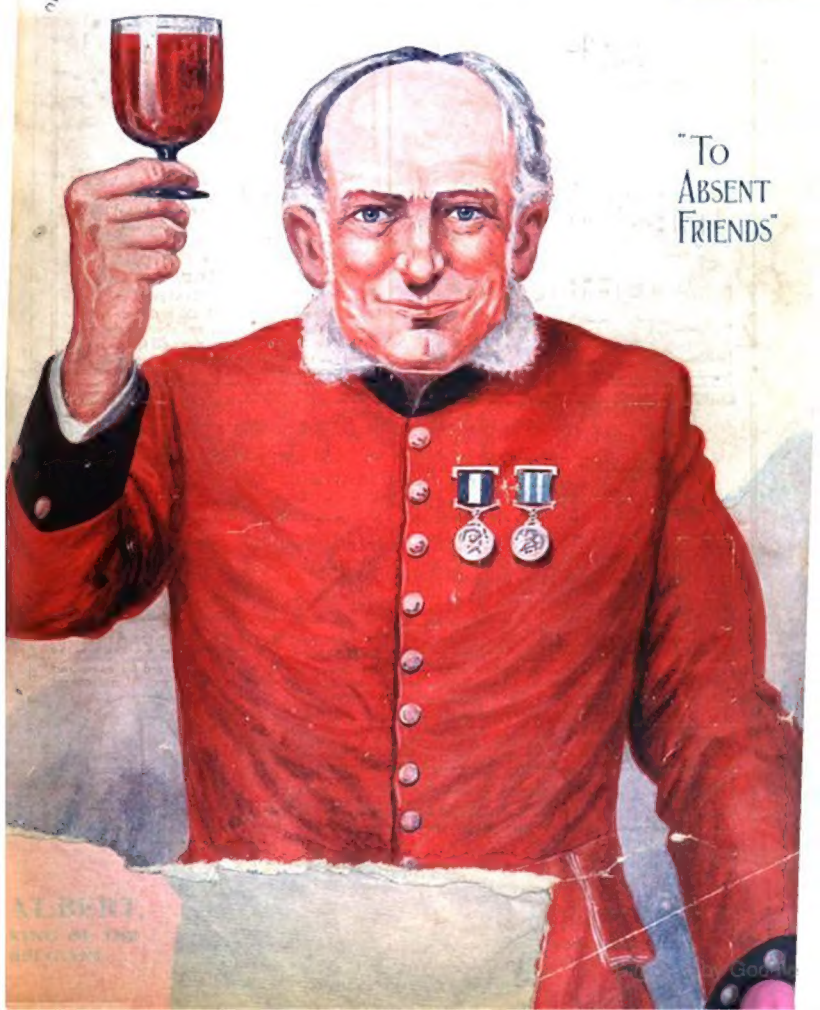

THE ROYAL MAGAZINE.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

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N.B.—All the names and characters mentioned in the stories in THE ROYAL MAGAZINE are purely imaginary.

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Photo *Apollo Studios.*

The gallant soldiers go to France,
I simply stay at home and dance;
But if the fighting gets much worse,
Perhaps I'll be a Red Cross Nurse.

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"GOOD NEWS FROM THE FRONT."

From the painting by R. Hamilton.

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STAGING A REVUE

By Margaret Chute.

Catchy chorus songs, star performers, staggering costumes, and the last word in speciality dancers, are the necessary ingredients for a revue. The following article tells you how they are welded into a harmonious whole, and takes you right into the atmosphere of ragtime and patchouli.

"Eight changes, my dear, and four flights of stairs every time! In the first scene I'm a shrimp—*some* creation that, I give you my word; then I'm a telephone operator, a flapper, a cucumber, the lowest corner star in the American flag, the—how many's that?—oh yes, the newest thing in females, an aeroplane girl, and an ostrich feather!

"That's the lot; jolly isn't it? Work? My maternal aunt, I should say so! Didn't know what work meant till our new producer got started. He is *some* producer, dearie, and don't you forget it. . . . Oh, tea for two, please, and pastries, and buck up, do!"

"A magnum of Clicquot, 1906, waiter, quickly, please. . . . Yes, it's shaping well; shaping deuced well. A bit rough yet, of course; but mark my words, dear boy, when this revue is launched it will prove a high-water mark in revues.

"The producer? A smart fellow—knows his job; makes the chorus sit up and take notice all the time. Full of ideas and new schemes for grouping and lighting. Author? Oh, he—er—they are quite all right. Knocking the book together as we go along.

"Got some clinking good numbers, by the way; and when London sees half the chorus as the American flag, and the other half as

Miss Eileen Melyneux won laurels at the Alhambra both in *Keep Smiling* and *Not Likely*. She is now playing at the Winter Garden in New York, but will return to the Alhambra in the spring.

Photo Weather & Boys.

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the Union Jack with our star, Pearly Genius, in the centre as Boadicea or Britannia or somebody off a postage-stamp—well, if London doesn't arise and award us the prize for revues I'll—I'll never drink another glass of champagne. Here's luck—chin-chin! Hullo! time I was getting back. Come and watch the rehearsal for a bit, will you?"

A little study in contrasts, this—with apologies—the chorus girl, with her pot of tea and plate of pastries, at a steaming tea-shop, and the revue manager, with his expensive cigar and magnum of champagne, at a swagger restaurant. It is a "rest hour" for both, snatched from frantic stretches of frenzied work and worry in an atmosphere of stale smoke, rag-time melodies, patchouli, and bad language.

For an hour their ways lie apart, very far apart. Then they meet again, under the same ornate roof, to work furiously, with the same object in sight—the success of the revue, which means £2 weekly to the chorus girl, and a fat bank balance to the manager.

The Tango gave Maurice and Florence Walton an opportunity of winning fame in London, and many revues were enriched by their delightful dancing.

Photo by Bassano.

One of the most charming of revue actresses, Miss Shirley Kellogg, scored notable triumphs both in *Hullo, Ragtime!* and its successor, *Hullo, Tango!*

She looks forward to eight changes of costume, twice daily, with four flights of stairs to climb. *He* sits in a comfortable office, smoking, smiling. But *his* is the brain that has thought it all out, *his* is the enterprise that has turned forty chorus girls into butterflies, Union Jacks, and cucumbers. *His* is the purse that stands the strain, *his* is the head that bears the brunt of innumerable worries.

So he deserves his hard-won leisure, without doubt, when the overture is "rung in," and the revue starts on a long, laughing career.

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In the meantime, staging a revue is a tiresome, tricky business. Everybody has seen a revue. Having seen a revue, everybody must have grasped the fact that several salient and indispensable features are needed to produce that highly successful form of entertainment. These features, briefly, are as follows:

A title; several catchy—indeed, highly infectious—chorus songs; a bunch of stars, American and otherwise; a collection of staggering costumes; a paralysing beauty chorus; some "speciality" dancers, in the latest Cuddle-Clutch or Huggy-Hitch; and that's about all.

Now, the great point is, having got hold of all these weird and separate features, to knead them together so that the ultimate result is a revue, plain and simple—apart from the comedians' jokes.

Therein lies the genius of the manager and producer.

It was in *The Passing Show* that Miss Elsie Janis first captured the hearts of Londoners, who paid willing homage to her whimsical charm and vivacity.

Photo Foulsham & Banfield.

Could anything be more diametrically opposite than an American vaudeville star and an English beauty chorus? Yet the two must be made

Photo Lenare.

Miss Lee White is another talented revue actress, and her singing of "Your King and Country Want You" in the early days of the war is a thing to be remembered.

one—to work together with harmony and smiles. Revue staging is a business which needs tact.

The manager in his opulent office collects the various ingredients. Somebody drops in with a jolly title, such as "Cheer-oh! Everybody!" or "*Some* Syncopation!" or "Mother will be pleased." The title—never mind which—is adopted; then a scenic artist arrives, and proceeds to build half-a-dozen novel and picturesque scenes round the title.

The leading lady is next engaged, also a

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collection of comedians and other ladies and gentlemen for "parts"—see contracts.

Following a voice trial, attended by several hundred would be revue-ites, a beauty chorus of forty is chosen, and bound down at the usual salary. Somebody with a turn for writing dialogue is next invited to join forces with the man who thought out the title, and their names appear on all posters, in small print, as the authors of the revue.

To them the scenic artist reveals his scenes, and several costumiers impart their ideas concerning clothes. Round these important items the authors weave a plot, not forgetting the fact that the feminine star must sing, and the male star must gag, and the beauty chorus must be seen as often and as clearly as possible. It is no joke to be a revue writer in these stirring times!

When a collection of Jewish gentlemen has strummed, hummed, and banged forth syncopated melodies until the manager has chosen the noisiest, and when the various stars have produced their own special "numbers," and insisted upon singing them or leaving the cast, then, and then only, is it time to start rehearsals.

To the unitiated this may sound like a lot of exaggerated nonsense, but it is not! It is a fairly clear explanation of the strange method indulged in by revue builders throughout England.

Having collected all the necessary ingredients

Miss Ethel Levey, who acted with such distinction in Hippodrome revues, has been equally successful in drama, and scored a great hit in *Outcast*, at Wyndham's Theatre.

the kneading process begins. In this the manager is assisted by a producer, a stage manager, a chorus master, a musical director, the authors, the composers, the costumiers, the company (with parts), and the entire beauty chorus. The stage is cleared right to the side walls, the gang-plank is turned into a temporary office, and supports a chair whereupon the manager rests, flanked by various lieutenants.

On the stage the chorus, directed by a whirlwind-operator in his shirt sleeves, is going through complicated evolutions.

Like a maniac the producer strides across the breadth of the stage, again and yet again. Waving his arms, his legs, his head in one paralysing whole, he produces a song, shouting ceaselessly something that closely resembles a crazy gramophone record.

Photo. *Foulsham & Banfield.*

Miss Connie Ediss was one of the bright particular stars at the Gaiety before revue claimed her for its own.

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Mr. Robert Hale is a great favourite with revue audiences: here he is seen in an imitation of Mr. George Grossmith—

Photo Bassano.

—while here is that old Gaiety favourite himself, Mr. Grossmith has been the life and soul of many revues, of which he has written dozens.

"For the love of heaven—stand still, you girls! Say, miss—you, in the blue jumper—come down to earth, will you? This isn't a reception at the Ritz, so don't kid yourself it is! You're here to work, and don't you forget it. D'you get me? . . . All right, all right. Once again, ladies; right from the word 'Go.' And give it some ginger, if you don't mind; at present you look like a collection of unset jellies with the gelatine missing. . . . Heave about. STOP!"

A terrified halt; scared glances from eyes that are bent steadfastly on the shirt-sleeved whirlwind. What explosion will follow? Wait—no explosion at all; merely a fresh idea.

"Hold up, girls! I've gotten a new notion. All you cucumbers get off—hustle now; O.P. side. That's the style! The shrimps and the lobsters start the number and at the word 'Dixie,' in the first chorus, you enter—sharp—in double file, step as before. Have you got the idea? Good—good—get off, then, like sweet girls and let's have another shot. Say, miss—I'm looking at you; you've left the Ritz, but, my sainted Sam, it's taken you a dashed long time—so buck up, and then we can all go home! . . . Piano, please! Are you all ready?—Let it rip!"

In the stalls the authors are busy writing a new scene for the female star, assisted by that lady and the actor who will eventually join her in the scene.

"You see," she is saying quite clearly, "my costume is a new hydroplane - and - swimming dress combined—such a cute idea—and I thought a nice little scene in mid-ocean, on a—yes, that's the idea—*quite!*"

Close to the footlights, well in advance of the frenzied producer and his frantic beauties, somebody is singing, or rather speaking, the lines of a song—the song to which the chorus provides such an animated background. A gentleman in a soft felt hat and long tweed overcoat, who had been lounging against the proscenium arch, chewing thoughtfully, now advances towards the gang-plank and addresses the manager thus:

"Sa-ay, when do I get a look in? I've been here an almighty time, and I want a chance to work in my new telephone act right away.

Photo Dover Street Studios.

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That most sparkling of actresses, Gaby Deslys, has entranced many revue-at the Palace Theatre, where she appeared in the autumn in *The Kaiser's Ruby*.

Photo
Dover Street Studios.

Miss Phyllis Monkman won fame as a dancer when quite a child, and is now charming revue goers at the Alhambra.

You said you'd fixed it, with a bunch of girls as operators — what? Oh, waal — get it over, and let's get on with it!"

Scenes are rehearsed singly, and then strung together, with songs to fill in odd spaces. Everything is sacrificed to the stars — everything is pushed aside to allow the comedian a chance to work his "special" acts, or the leading lady an opportunity to wear a new dress.

When the scenery is ready pandemonium ensues, and frantic cucumbers get hopelessly mixed up with telephone girls and mermaids as they dart round the wings and try to get on, ten at a time, at an entrance scarcely wide enough for one!

But it all comes right in the end. A bevy of shrimps assembles, ready for work; the principals leave their dressing-rooms; the conductor takes his place; the "speciality" dancers, in a mixture of Spanish and Cockney, declare their inability to dance at all unless a protruding flight of steps is instantly removed from the stage. The limelight men in the roof get ready to flood the gang-plank and stage with dazzling golden rays; the orchestra plunges into one of those catchy tunes which all London will soon be humming; the manager lights a new—and large—cigar, and up goes the curtain.

Thus London's latest revue is launched—for better for worse, for richer for poorer—and considering the many interests at stake let us hope its flag will fly, mast-high, marked "Success"!

The Christmas Tree

By T. P. Cameron Wilson.

This story gained the £50 prize in our recent competition. It is a fine story of a brave man, the kind one is the better for reading, and I am very happy to have secured it.—Ed. R. M.

I.

There is no doubt that the Missionary had in him some divine spark of insanity. It is not necessarily an insane act to go and live on an island some two hundred miles from the coast of New Guinea, but your action verges on insanity if you have a wife and child with you.

The Missionary—good madman—came out of his bungalow and stood blinking in the moonlight. He did not notice a little Papuan—almost as black as the hibiscus shadow wherein he squatted—who chewed a wild mango and watched him dispassionately. The Missionary was dreaming of grey and rainy skies, with low clouds hurrying before a western wind. But presently, at the sound of voluminous spitting, (for so a raw mango must be eaten) he awoke suddenly to the great white stars that shine in a tropical sky.

The Papuan, seeing himself observed, took a fresh mouthful of mango, and turned his eyes so that they seemed to point over his left shoulder. He was just visible in the reflected moonlight. Then he spat explosively again, and said something in a rapid and barely audible whisper.

The Missionary caught at the verandah rail in front of him, and stared as though he saw something supernatural in that stolid black mask, with its munching jaws.

"*White* people?" he said. "Coming here?"

The Papuan nodded, pointed again, if one may say so, with his eyes, threw down the rest of his mango, and walked away silently. The Missionary stared into the darkness that crept to his very threshold. For three years he had seen no white man but a fat Dutch trader, who was more yellow than white, and who haggled over stores, and was generally drunk. He decided not to tell his wife. The disappointment would be too terrible if, after all, nothing happened. He sat there in the verandah, his eyes strained eastward in an expectation so passionate that it was almost a pain.

And then a shout rang out. It was far and very faint, but the Missionary's ears were too well acquainted with every kind of native shout—from the deep roar of anger to the shrill, prolonged note of the news-carrier—not to recognise it as alien to this island. He fetched his rifle from the living-room and fired it into the air. Like an echo there came back an answering shot. The Missionary flung caution to the wind.

"White people—coming here!" he yelled. "White people! They may be English!"

His wife was a little pale woman, with a resolute mouth, and eyes which you thought very appealing and girlish till you caught a certain fire in them, and realised that like all good women she was herself a missionary—of sorts. She was, however, a woman. She saw that her hair was tidy before she did anything else. Then she ran to her bedroom, and knelt by the bed, and said silly things to Peter, who was lying there half asleep.

Peter was five years old, and she talked to him as though he was five weeks old. He did not mind that, only he could not understand why she cried and laughed together. It was, if he had known it, because no white person had yet seen her crowning pride, the pride which was now five years old. And white people were coming now, to see it, white people, people to whom she could show him off! She was, indeed, a woman.

To the Missionary's dazzled sight there appeared out of the scrub, distinct yet ghostly in the brilliant moonlight, not only three

white men, but two white ladies. To his amazed ears there came the sound not only of English voices, but of cultured English voices. He looked up at the sky with a sudden gesture, which was full of unconscious pathos. It was as though he dared Heaven to destroy this dream which had been granted him. Then he found himself, quite suddenly, holding someone's hand, and staring at him with eyes which would persist in filling with ridiculous tears.

"I am so glad," he heard a voice saying, "so glad that we are not unwelcome. I was doubtful about coming. I told Sir Walter here that some of you missionaries get so acclimatised that you are positively annoyed by the sight of fellow men. I am John Johns, you know, the trader."

The Missionary, moving into the light, saw a blue-eyed man, of immense height and breadth, and knew him for the most famous trader west of Australia. He shook his hand again, and tried to say something intelligent, but failed.

"Let me introduce Sir Walter Read," said the trader.

The Missionary was greeted by a military-looking little Englishman with a tanned skin and a clipped moustache.

"Explorin'," said Sir Walter Read. "Heard you'd got a wife and kid. Thought we'd drop in. Christmas Day, you know."

"Yes," replied the Missionary. "I and my wife knew, but we did not tell the boy. It would have been a little foolish, you know, telling him of an English Christmas. He would have expected—the disappointment——"

He stopped.

"Got some bally toys and things," said Sir Walter, with a cough, "and a Christmas tree. Thought it was the thing to do."

He was a little uncomfortable before the strange joy which lay on the Missionary's face like sunlight.

"Where *is* the boy?" inquired another voice. "And aren't you going to introduce us? And we're dying to see your wife, and get ourselves tidy."

"Lady Read," announced the trader. "Miss Allen. Professor Hoskins."

They turned to the bungalow, laughing and chatting as they went.

"Awfully sorry," said the trader, "to turn up so late, but Lady Read was determined to get here actually on Christmas Day when she heard you'd got a kid. Can you rouse him up, by the way, to eat turkey? I suppose he's asleep now. You can? Good! If you can put up with us, we will stay for a couple of days—no longer. I left my boys in camp about fifteen miles east. Couldn't bring 'em up as we had stores with us, and it's difficult going, even when you're loaded light."

The Missionary heard him as in a dream. He saw Lady Read, cool, well-dressed, pretty, walking where no white woman but his wife had ever walked before. He saw Miss Allen, spectacled, alert, rather gaunt and tall, but somehow attractive to his tired eyes. He saw Professor Hoskins, a little, fat, red-haired man, with amused interest written across his rather foolish face. But he saw them all as in a dream. He was thinking, as he watched them, of a Christmas tree, packed somehow and somewhere among the luggage which two sweating natives, lit with their own torches, were bringing even now into the house.

II.

"So I ask you all," said Sir Walter, adjusting his paper cap, "to drink the health of Peter."

It was nearly midnight. There had been a vast amount of cooking to be done, and other preparations for the high festival. The Missionary's wife was bright-eyed and excited as a child. It was providential, she said, that Peter had slept all day because of the heat. He was as fresh, now, as an English daisy.

They stood up and turned to the end of the table where Peter sat in state. There was a moment's silence while they drank, and in the silence there came from very far away a sound like faint, intermittent thunder. No one noticed that the trader set down his glass before he had so much as sipped from it. No one saw the Missionary's face go suddenly sick and white. They sat down again and laughed. The women, who were spoiling Peter disgracefully, kissed their hands to him.

"And I beg to announce," said Sir Walter, "that in the next room there is a surprise."

Peter's eyes gleamed He clapped his hands ecstatically. There were other things, then, than turkey and plum-pudding and crackers. These strange and wholly delightful fairies had yet another gift for him in the next room.

The trader, looking a little ridiculous with a green paper cap poised on the back of his immense bald head, had risen, and was looking out of the window. The Missionary joined him. Together they stared silently into the blackness. Above them the stars hung, very near and white, and in the garden

they could see the moving stream, a bar of palest silver just visible across the darkness. Behind them in the lighted room they heard the thin voice of Professor Hoskins telling a story to Peter, and illustrating it with realistic beast noises.

"And the *duck* said '*Whack-whack-whack-whack,*'" explained Professor Hoskins; "so the *dove* said "*If you do—you're-a-bru-u-ute.*"

The men at the window looked at each other grimly. Then their eyes went back to the darkness. A little leaping flame, in strange, red contrast to the white fire of the stars, moved for a moment high up on some hidden hill. The note of that faint thunder had changed. It was nearer now, and came in quick beats, like the barking of some fabulous monster.

"We must tell them," said the trader. "They're old hands, all of them. I'm not sure of the Professor. I didn't want to bring him, myself. A bit soft. However, your wife'll stand it?"

The Missionary nodded. He was trying not to think of Peter, and thinking of nothing else."

"And the *cow* said '*It's-in-the-next-R-O-O-M,*'" said the Professor, managing very cleverly to turn "room" into a sound not unlike the lowing of cattle. The trader turned back from the window. The others were moving towards the door, and Peter was tugging at his mother's skirt in his eagerness to see the surprise.

"Wait!" said the trader.

They turned and stared at him. He seemed to have become suddenly an old man. Sir Walter began to swear softly under his moustache.

"You must know——" began the trader. He looked round at them, and gulped. Then he turned to the Missionary.

"Natives," said the Missionary simply. "Listen!"

There fell instantly one of those terrible silences which a man experiences perhaps once in his life, and never forgets. Like the beating of a great heart they heard the "thud-thud" that came from without.

"War-drums," said the trader.

"Made, I believe," said Professor Hoskins, "of iguana skin."

His remark was so utterly childish that the tense nerves of the trader seemed to snap as he heard it, and he laughed hysterically. He strode to the door and went out.

"What does it mean, please?" asked Lady Read.

"It means," said the Missionary, "that the old killing-lust is on them again. They have come from the forests in the heart of the island—hundreds of them. It has happened before. This must have been smouldering for months. Ten years ago they murdered my predecessor at daybreak. They hate Europeans on principle, though three-quarters of them have never even seen a white man."

"But surely," put in Miss Allen, "we can do something—get away before they come, or——"

"That noise told me ten minutes ago that we are completely surrounded," said the Missionary. "They can see in the dark, like cats, and we——"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"*Want the surprise!*" cried Peter eagerly, and the Missionary's wife began to sob silently, above his head The others looked at her vacantly. They were not thinking of anything so near at hand.

"At daybreak?" said Professor Hoskins suddenly.

The Missionary started.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You said that your predecessor was killed at daybreak?"

"Yes."

"Is that their custom?"

"To wait for daylight? I can't say. Quite possibly it is so."

The Professor went to the window and peered out.

"Which way does the stream flow?" he asked.

There was a little impatient movement among those who listened to him. His ingenious and foolish interest in irrelevant things might have been amusing at any other time, but with that maddening "thud-thud" of the war-drums as a background for his squeaky curiosity, it was horrible. No one answered him.

"But I really want to know," he insisted in the aggrieved voice of a spoilt child.

"It flows east," answered the Missionary curtly.

The door opened, and the trader came in. He was still wearing a symbol of festival, the green paper cap, and under it his haggard face looked ghastly, from mere force of contrast.

"It's no good," he said at once. "We must barricade the house and make a fight for it. They have surrounded us completely. Lulaina says they are sitting in a great circle, waiting for the chief to signal."

"Where is the chief?" asked the Professor.

"Opposite these windows, smoking. Lulaina crept round them and smelt them, he says. He thinks there are about a hundred, not more. Look here, Sir Walter, we must make a move. Will you ladies go into——"

"Wait a moment," said the Professor. "Can't we get back to the camp by floating down the stream? It reaches the camp, doesn't it?"

"Yes, but we've nothing to go in, not so much as a catamaran. Besides, they're on each side of the stream. There certainly *is* a gap in their circle, but it's only a yard wide at most. Not even a log could float down without their stopping it, if they chose to."

"Couldn't we——"

"My dear man, there's not likely to be a single crack of escape unknown to us. For God's sake let us *do* something."

Sir Walter Read squared his shoulders, and brought his dazed senses down to the work that lay next his hand.

"That table!" he began sharply. "Clear the cloth off. Bundle it all into a corner. Now up-end it against the window. What guns have you got, padre?"

"First of all," said the Missionary, "don't you think the ladies had better get into the next room? It's here that they'll attack first—wherever the chief is, you know."

He turned to the women, but they seemed paralysed.

They were watching the little fat Professor with his pale, interested face. He made a strange figure as he stood there with a great crimson cock's-comb balanced on his red hair.

"*Want the s'prise!*" wailed Peter.

The Professor turned and stared at him. They saw his face go suddenly red, and a sort of joy began to dance in his eyes.

"Good Heavens!" cried the Professor. "It might do!"

He caught at the Missionary's arm.

"I have a plan," he said. "Will you promise to make no move until *they* move—to wait here until they attack you or go away?"

"We should do that in any case, I suppose," said the Missionary.

"Then you promise? You can go on as usual, barricade the house, get your firearms ready. But wait—wait."

"Mad!" muttered the trader.

Professor Hoskins bent and kissed Peter.

"You shall have your surprise, to-morrow," he said. Then he turned to the others.

"Good-bye," he said. "Would you mind closing the door after me, Johns? No, not *this* door—the door on to the verandah."

The trader started forward.

"Look here, Professor, it won't do," he said, "you can't——"

But the Professor had gone. In the next room, standing resplendent in a flower-pot, the Christmas tree glittered with a score of lit candles. It was hung with the little gaudy decorations which one sees nowhere else but on Christmas trees—scarlet balls made of thinnest glass, absurdly golden apples sprinkled with imitation hoar-frost, flowers, barrels of highly coloured sweets, crackers, tin trumpets, even a small but magnificent Father Christmas.

The Professor beamed at it, carefully extinguished all the candles but three, and then lifted the tree, pot and all, and carried it to the door. It was barely three feet high, but it had about it the sort of elfish look which little trees have when they are adorned with useless splendour. The Professor carried it out on to the verandah. He shut the door behind him, and stood there a moment, with the tree in his arms, trying to penetrate the darkness.

The beating of the drums sounded very insistent and mysterious as he stepped forward carefully. He could see nothing, especially as the lighted candles burnt so close to his eyes that they intensified the night. Then he was conscious that the beating of the war-drums had ceased in front of him. At the other side of the bungalow he could still hear their tireless throb, but ahead of him, where the stream lay, there was a tense and awful silence. He felt his way very gingerly, touching the ground with a tentative foot before he advanced a step, and gradually he became aware, with that sixth sense which is hidden somewhere in all of us, that men were close to him. It was as though he could feel the vibration of their breathing, of their beating hearts, of their blood, moving through a thousand veins somewhere there in the dark.

The war-drums had ceased altogether now. The silence here had warned the others behind the bungalow. The Professor stood in a great silence, one lonely man in the midst of a hidden multitude.

And suddenly a spear came out of the darkness, showing dimly in the candle-light as a swift grey thing which came, and was gone. It had been aimed, evidently, at the tree, for it passed between two branches and was lost. A ghost-murmur, a sort of invisible rippling of the surface of the senses, swept across that watching throng, and died.

The Professor set down the tree, and stood

so that its light no longer shone into his eyes. In a moment or two he could make out his surroundings. He was close to the stream. On the other side of it, within six feet of where he stood, he could see the shadowy outlines of men, squatting motionless. At the same instant he became conscious of innumerable tiny points of white, at the height of a few feet from the ground, and he realised with a strange thrill that they were eyes looking out from dusky faces, and reflecting back to him the tiny lights of his tree. He tried in vain to pick out the chief, but could distinguish no individual dress or face.

Then the reek of a pungent tobacco came to him, and he saw across the stream the sudden glow of a sucked pipe, lighting for an instant, in its dim red heat, the dyed feathers of a chief's head-dress.

The Professor sat down by the side of his tree, and began deliberately to make a noise like a cow.

III.

As dawn came suddenly out of the sea, Jimmy Todd (sometime able-bodied seaman in His Majesty's Navy, and now the right-hand man of John Johns the trader) got to his feet and went forth to bathe. But first he kicked the cook and spoke vigorously of breakfast. He had plunged into the sea and was splashing about like a huge baby in his bath, when a shout from the camp reached him. He raised his dripping head and saw the cook dancing violently on the shore, and waving in the air something which looked like a pair of trousers.

Jimmy Todd, swearing a little, rose out of the sea and waded ashore. The cook, who was a negro, fairly thrust into his hands a dripping pair of trousers, a shirt, and a coat. His eyes seemed to have become entirely white; there was sweat on his wrinkled forehead, and under his skin showed that strange greenish tinge which violent emotion produces sometimes in the negro.

"What the Moses do *you* think you're doin'?" demanded Jimmy Todd. "Been bit, or what?"

The cook pointed with one shaking finger at a name, written in marking-ink on the neck-band of the shirt, then at a brown stain which had spread all across its left breast.

Jimmy Todd stiffened. The name was Hoskins. And he knew enough of life, and death, to be certain that the stain was blood.

"In stream," whined the cook, "when I go get wattah for brekfus."

Jimmy Todd gazed upstream with a frown that made the cook whimper. Then he turned and bellowed orders to the camp. A strange crew trotted up at the sound of his voice. It was composed of about thirty men, natives and white men mixed, and there was hardly one of them whom a professor of eugenics would not have despised openly and immediately. Yet they were men picked by John Johns, the greatest trader west of Australia.

Jimmy Todd was brief.

"These clothes came downstream this morning," he said. "They're the Professor's, and they're stained with blood. I don't understand it, because these heathen devils generally keep the clothes for wearin', but there it is. Fifteen miles upstream there's trouble. We may be too late to save 'em, but by Heaven we'll avenge 'em. Twenty dollars to the first man who reaches the parson's bungalow. Follow the stream. Dismiss!"

Upstream they went—outwardly a mere raggle-taggle crowd of ruffians, but to the experienced eye, trained men, moving to a hidden impulse or command, as though an invisible thread roped them together. There was no marching order about them. They went for the most part at a stooping dog-trot. But no single man of them took a false step, or tripped, or ran carelessly into a hanging branch.

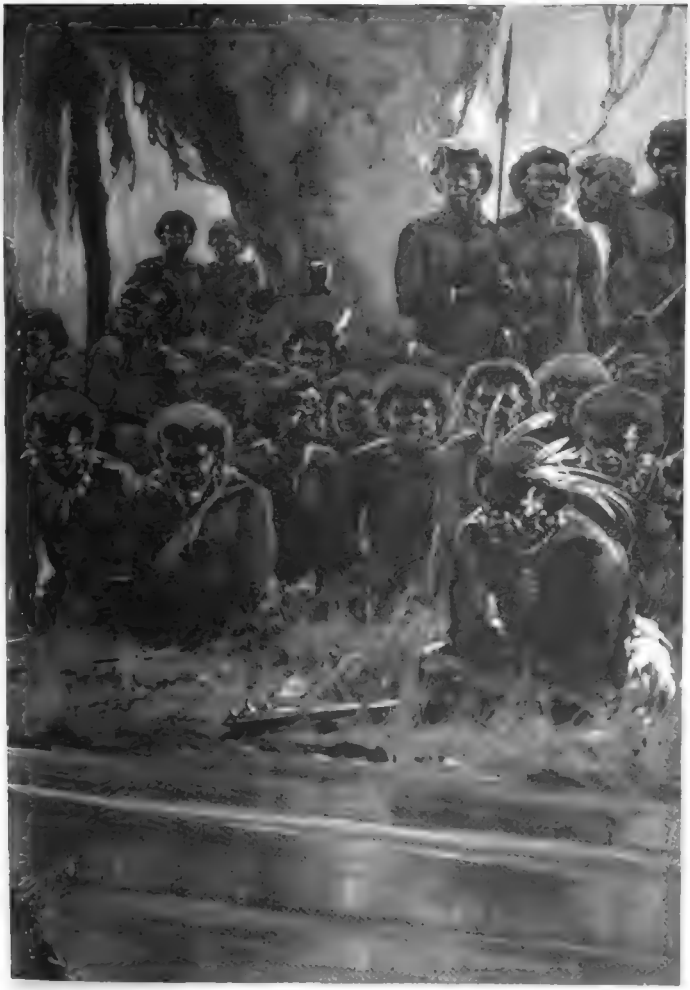
They seemed to *flow* almost silently along the banks of the stream, and to carry, as it were, each of the five senses loaded to the muzzle. Believe it or not, as you will, but it was in little over an hour that the first of them reached the great fringe of bamboos which shut off the Missionary's garden from the scrub. Here they waited, and then spread out cautiously, moving like snakes through the undergrowth, till they had the house well in view.

"Good heavens!" gasped Jimmy Todd. "*What's that?*"

A little Christmas tree, with two of its candles garishly alight in the morning sunshine, stood on the garden side of the stream. Facing it, on the other side of the stream, a great horde of natives was squatting or standing, all staring in the same direction.

They were almost obscenely hideous in that clear and glaring light. Their woolly hair was for the most part dyed with lime into an unearthly red, their flat noses were disfigured with pieces of bone or shell thrust through below the nostrils, and their only garments were dried leaves suspended from the waist by belts of black string. Most of

The Professor was naked except for a vest which was tied round him in the manner of an apron. . . . On his head was a scarlet paper cap,—



—like a cock's comb, and he was dancing a sort of hornpipe, and making a noise like the crowing of a cock. (*Page* 118, *col.* 1.)

them were grinning widely, and the watchers could see that their teeth were black with betel juice. The odour of their crowded bodies came across the fresh morning like a whip-lash across the face.

They were watching Professor Hoskins.

The Professor was naked except for a vest which was tied round him in the manner of an apron. His skin looked monstrously white in comparison with the dark bodies in front of him. On his head was a scarlet paper cap, like a cock's comb, and he was dancing a sort of hornpipe, and making a noise like the crowing of a cock.

Jimmy Todd had seen men in a thousand strange attitudes and under a thousand strange conditions, and the smiling oddity of the Professor did not blind his eyes to the fact that the poor, fat little man was near fainting with fatigue. He gave a swift, whispered order, and his men made their silent way out into the sheltering bamboos again, and came in a hurried *détour* to the rear of the watching natives. Then Jimmy Todd fired his rifle, and thirty shots rang out at the signal.

There arose instantly a noise like the bursting of the flood-gates of sound. Black bodies came leaping and crashing through the undergrowth. There were shrieks and whoops and the crack of rifles. A great barbed spear whistled through the air, and took Jimmy Todd's neighbour in the jaw. Beyond him on the left he could hear the strangled scream of a white man, and he knew that it was death which had caught back the scream in his throat.

Jimmy Todd kept his head and fired steadily. He was working slowly to the bungalow again, and presently he saw, standing like a little black monument on the far side of the stream, alone in a wide, flat space, the befeathered figure of the chief, poised to throw a spear. Jimmy Todd took careful aim and fired. The chief sprang three feet into the air, twisted like a cat, and fell face downward over his spear.

Instantly the war shrieks fell into silence. The chief was dead. Natives began to run and double like hares, shying at their own shadows, hurling panic-driven spears at their own friends, chattering, wailing, slobbering fevered litanies to their particular and private gods. In a few minutes there was no trace of them left but a far crashing of branches and a few wailing whoops, sounding fainter and fainter in the distance.

"Might almost be a herd o' pigs," said Jimmy Todd.

IV.

"They liked the cock-crow best," said the Professor, beaming round on the haggard company that watched him. "I imitated every animal I have ever heard of. But they liked the cock-crow best—that and the cow. When I went on to other animals, they made feeble imitations, themselves, of the cock-crow to show that I must come back to it. I must have done it sixty times, I should think."

The trader was sitting before him, his great bulk collapsed like a pricked bladder. Sir Walter Read, with lines in his face which were not there yesterday, was passing a dazed hand across his eyes. The others looked almost too weary to keep their eyes open. Peter lay asleep on a sofa.

"We—we had to wait," said the trader simply.

The Professor—clothed temporarily in an overcoat much too big for him—looked up with a little catch of his breath. He saw Lady Read, gone suddenly thin and ill-looking. He saw the Missionary's wife, with something still in her eyes of that awful night vigil in a blind room. He saw Miss Allen, her alertness gone, a tired woman, quite grey and old.

"You had the harder part," he said softly. "While I was acting out there, you had to wait. Yes, I am sorry; you had the harder part to play."

"But what did you *do*?" asked the Missionary.

"I sent a message to the camp."

"But how could you——"

"It struck me that possibly blood-stained clothes floating down stream would rouse the camp, if only they were seen. I remembered that the stream spread out over stones and became very shallow just where the camp is. I suppose some of it sinks into the sand before it reaches the sea. Anything sent downstream would catch against those stones and stay there. You remember how the whole of that little estuary is strewn with bits of logs and dead things? I sent down my coat, my waistcoat, my—er—trousers, my shirt, my handkerchief, and so on."

He turned to Jimmy Todd, who stood at attention near the door.

"How many of them did you get?" he asked.

"Trousers, sir, shirt, sir, coat, sir," said Jimmy Todd.

"The others must have got hung up on the way," remarked the Professor.

"But the bloodstains?"

"Ah, yes, the bloodstains! Luckily, someone threw a spear at me, or rather at the tree, and it grazed the left side of my neck as it passed. The shirt—er—really required no doctoring. It was soaked by the time I took it off."

"But why the Christmas tree, and the cock-crow?"

"You see," said the Professor, "I worked it all out like this. If one of us had gone out of the house in the dark, he would have been killed at once. You said that they could see in the dark like cats, you remember.

"Now suppose I had opened the door and gone out as I was, stealthily, in the dark. I should have had a dozen spears through me before I had gone two yards towards the stream. Then how was I to get to the stream? Something which would puzzle them was required—something, if possible, which would awe them, make them hold their hand, to wait and see what was happening. I gave it up, till Peter supplied an idea. What could be better than the Christmas tree?

"I have often been struck by their unearthly look when they are decorated and lit up. They are not quite trees, and not quite—I can't explain it, but I daresay you know what I mean. I extinguished most of the candles, so that later on, as they began to burn out, I could light some of the others and keep it illuminated as long as possible.

"I confess that that was a later idea, a development. At first I had only considered how I could get to the stream and send a message without their realising that a message was being sent. Then it occurred to me that I might waste time almost indefinitely, keep them employed, or amused, till help came."

"The whole thing," broke in the trader, "was sheer insanity."

"Or rather a gamble," suggested the Professor — "a speculation. It might not have succeeded, of course. But the impossible has always appealed to me irresistibly."

"It was," said the trader, almost angrily, "the pluckiest thing I——"

"Not at all," interrupted the Professor. "I have already said that yours was the more difficult part to play. I merely amused the natives, as I had previously amused Peter. They were puzzled at first. That spear they threw was an experiment—a sort of half-hearted attempt at wounding the strange god I carried. The god, luckily, proved invulnerable.

"They transferred their attention to me. I made a noise such as a cow makes. They listened in silence. I changed the note to that of a pig, a pigeon, a lion, a cock. The last was my real success. They began to laugh, to settle down to enjoy the entertainment. But I had even a greater joy in store for them. I remembered that someone had said that very few of them had ever seen a white man before.

"I undressed. And the sight of my skin fairly took away their breath. I heard a low murmur of excitement run along their hidden ranks. And they never looked to see where I threw the clothes. It was all quite simple till dawn came. Then I began to grow tired. I took off some of the ornaments from the tree and threw them across the stream. The chief appropriated them all for his own use or adornment, which was just as well, or they might have wanted me to give more than I had. As it was, they were happy as long as the chief was happy.

"When they grew tired of that, I added to my entertainment. I danced and made animal noises simultaneously. It was a huge success, but it couldn't have lasted. I never heard any sound in my life more blessed than the sound of those rifle shots. In the excitement which followed, some of the natives fell into the stream and dropped their spears. One of them climbed out on this side and made straight for me."

The little Professor paused, and laughed.

"I got the best of it!" he said gleefully, while the trader who had thought him 'soft' looked at him with a kind of reverent awe. "I got the best of it, because I bit him. I bit his leg, and he ran."

Peter awoke and yawned and murmured something about a surprise. On a common impulse they turned to the window, and took down the rough barricade which had shut them off from all sight of the garden. The early sunlight streamed into the room, and they stood looking out at the fresh morning with a wakening gratitude in their hearts.

Still standing near the stream, the brave little Christmas tree faced the day with one tin trumpet hanging from its topmost branch. Near the trumpet a little flame still flickered palely in the sunlight. And then, even while they watched, the last candle burnt out. A thin line of smoke twisted above the tree, and vanished.

Aunt Janie *and the* Moonlight

By Keble Howard.

. . . Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, hath need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye.

I.

A very extraordinary thing has happened. If anyone had told me, forty-eight hours ago, that I should myself have called upon Miss Essington and announced—but I had better begin at the beginning.

Estelle Sergeant is my only niece, and I am her only aunt. For the matter of that, I am her only living relative, and it therefore behoves me to do everything I can to insure her future happiness.

Although I have never married myself, for reasons into which I do not care to enter, I am by no means a misogamist. In point of fact, I decided some two years ago that Estelle should marry the Reverend Arthur Brownlow, who is the senior curate of the parish of Broxholm, where I live.

Mr. Brownlow, I could see very quickly, was immensely taken with Estelle, and everything promised well for a successful issue to my little scheme. They could not, of course, marry on his stipend as a curate, but fortunately my means are fairly ample, and I had always decided to do my duty by Estelle if she married a man of whom I approved.

Estelle's bearing towards Mr. Brownlow was not altogether what I could have wished. She never spoke disrespectfully of him; on the other hand, she was rather too apt to address him as though he were a very much older brother, instead of one to whom she might some day be united by the closest possible ties.

After she had been seeing a good deal of him for several months I decided that it might be a good plan to send her on a visit to some friends of mine at Hampstead. It is an old saying that absence makes the heart grow fonder, and I could not help feeling that the polished, reserved, and gentlemanly manners of Mr. Brownlow would contrast most favourably with the garish tones of the men she would be likely to meet about London.

Unfortunately, however, my judgment was at fault. Her letters betrayed no anxiety to return to Broxholm; she seemed perfectly content to lead the trivial existence of Hampstead; she did not show the yearning that I could have wished for her parochial duties, and, most sinister sign of all, she did not once ask after the health of Mr. Brownlow.

This decided me, and I wrote to my friends, telling them that I was not in very robust

health, and should expect Estelle to return not later than the end of the week.

She did return, but what a changed Estelle! There was a something about her which I could not understand. I can only describe it as a sort of suppressed radiance. Though she was always as grave and demure as ever in my presence, I often heard her singing when she fancied that I was not within hearing, and she would run up and down the stairs, where formerly she used to walk with a listless step. I do not pretend to any profound knowledge of the world and its ways; indeed, living as I have always done a sheltered life beneath the tower of Broxholm parish church, it would be foolish of me to assume any such knowledge; yet I could not shut my eyes to the only possible explanation of the change in Estelle. She must be in love.

I felt it my duty to speak to her at once upon the subject.

"My child," I said, "there is a great change in you since you went to stay at Hampstead."

Estelle blushed, but did not answer.

"Come, my child," I persisted, "I want you always to regard me as your mother. I sent you to Hampstead for a very special reason."

She looked surprised.

"I will tell you quite frankly, my dear, what that reason was. I hoped that your absence from Broxholm would make a change in your feelings towards one whose name I need not mention. I want you to tell me quite frankly whether it has done so."

"I'm afraid, auntie," said Estelle, "that I don't understand you."

"Then let me make myself even clearer. Have you, during your absence at Hampstead, felt yourself drawn towards one of the opposite sex?"

Estelle blushed again, and replied very softly:

"Yes, auntie, I have."

"Mr. Brownlow!" I exclaimed, gladly seizing her hands.

"No," said Estelle. "I'm afraid it isn't Mr. Brownlow, auntie."

"Not Mr. Brownlow? Do you mean to tell me that you have given your heart to some man of whose existence I am absolutely unaware, and of whom I possibly, and even probably, should disapprove?"

"I hope very much that you won't disapprove of him, auntie. He's very well off, and he's very much in love with me."

"What do you mean, child? How do you know that? Has he had the effrontery to tell you so?"

"Yes, he did tell me so. I tried to stop him, but he wouldn't be stopped."

"And you?" I cried agitatedly. "Did you reply to this preposterous statement?"

"No, auntie; at least, I said that I couldn't possibly reply until I had spoken to you about it."

"That was a very proper and right thing to say. I shall send for this young man, and tell him that I have other views for you, and that he must not again molest you. What is his address?"

"The Red Lion," replied Estelle.

"The Red Lion? What Red Lion, for heaven's sake?"

"The Red Lion, Broxholm," said Estelle.

"Do you mean to tell me that he has had the impertinence to come and take up his residence under my very nose?"

"He hasn't taken up his residence at the Red Lion. He only arrived there to-day in his car, and he's coming to call on you this afternoon. . . . Why, there he is, coming up the path!"

I looked out of the window, and saw a tall young man in a grey suit approaching the house. I took an instinctive dislike to him. There was something very worldly in his appearance. I suppose he would be called good-looking, and I daresay his clothes were in the latest fashion, and he had an air of self-possession which betokened a man of travel and some experience; but what a very different type from my dear Mr. Brownlow! Where was that firm yet deprecating tread, that look of aloofness from the vulgar haunts of men, that modest stoop of the shoulders?

"No," I said to myself. "You shall never be the husband of my darling Estelle."

The next moment my maid entered with his card, and I read upon it:

The Hon. Bryan Endicott.

II.

Estelle, who has acquired a curious facility for changing colour without a moment's warning since her visit to Hampstead, turned quite pale. Without saying a word to her, I rose, and walked with a firm step into the room in which Mr. Endicott was waiting. He advanced, bowed slightly, and held out a letter, unsealed.

"Miss Griss?" he asked.

I bowed—very coldly.

"I have a letter of introduction from your friend, Mrs. Brackett, of Hampstead."

I took the letter, and drawing it from the envelope, read as follows:

My dearest Janie

This is to intr duce to you Mr. Bryan Endicott, who has been very well known to us ever since he was a boy. (He is, of course, the only son of Lord Brudenell.) I understand that he is making a tour of the chief towns of archæological interest in the Midlands and has decided to stop a night or two at Broxholm. I should be very glad if you could show him some little hospitality. You know how dreadfully one can be bored at a country hotel.

I hope you thought Estelle looking well. She is a sweet child, and you must send her to us again before long.

With my fondest love,

Yours ever,

Emily Brackett.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Endicott," I said.

We both sat.

"My friend, Mrs. Brackett, tells me that you are interested in archæology. May I inquire whether your studies include ecclesiastical architecture?"

"Rather!" said Mr. Endicott, with more enthusiasm than I had expected. "I'm most frightfully keen on cathedrals, and churches, and tombs, and all that sort of thing. That's why I've come to Broxholm."

"Indeed? Are you sure that that's the sole inducement for your visit to Broxholm?"

"No, not the sole inducement. I was also extremely anxious to make your acquaintance, Miss Griss."

"That's very good of you. May I ask what motive you had in being so anxious to make my acquaintance?"

"Well, you see, I had heard so much about you from your niece. She used to crack you up from morning till night."

"Really? Then am I to understand that you were in the company of my niece from morning till night?"

Mr. Endicott, I hoped, would have shown some embarrassment on receiving this very pointed thrust, but he did nothing of the kind.

"No," he said. "I had not that pleasure. But Miss Sergeant, whenever I did see her, was saying very charming things about you, and I understood from her friends that you were practically her sole topic of conversation at all times."

"Her friends must have found that exceedingly monotonous," I replied.

"I can't answer for them, but for my own part, I can assure you that I was never tired of hearing Miss Sergeant talk about you."

"So long as she talked to you, that was sufficient."

"About you, Miss Griss."

I perceived that the conversation was getting into a circle, so I varied it by giving him some very interesting information about our church. He produced a note-book and pencil, and very carefully entered the various points as I mentioned them. He expressed himself as being extremely anxious to see the church without delay, especially the flying buttresses, and asked me to accompany him thither.

I am never so happy as when expatiating upon the beauties of our church to strangers, but I have too much respect for the proprieties to act as guide to a young man—especially a young man of Mr. Endicott's stamp—without a third person being present. I, therefore, went in search of Estelle, and found her very near the door of the room which I had just quitted. She expressed reluctance at having to go out, but on my insisting that she must accompany us, ran upstairs so quickly that she tripped heavily and almost fell headlong. When I came down with my bonnet and coat on, I found her and Mr. Endicott at the extreme corners of the drawing-room.

We spent a most interesting hour in the church, even climbing to the very summit of the tower. The ascent of the tower was accomplished in the most satisfactory manner; Estelle went first, I followed, and then came Mr. Endicott. When the time came for the descent, however, Mr. Endicott offered to go first in case either of us should fall. This seemed to me very thoughtful, but I had not expected that Estelle would be so very prompt in taking the second place.

Before I could even scramble through the low aperture leading from the roof to the steps, they had disappeared, and, although I lost no time in the descent, and even risked my neck in the desire to overtake them, they must have been down at least a whole minute before I rejoined them. I found Mr. Endicott carefully examining a brass of great antiquity in the south wall, while Estelle, whose hat was slightly awry, was gazing with remarkable intentness at the west window.

It was with no little relief, therefore, that I learnt from Mr. Endicott that he proposed to leave Broxholm the following morning, *en route* for Worcester, and I felt that the least I could do in response to my friend Mrs. Brackett's request was to invite the young man to dine with us that evening. By a

happy chance, Mr. Brownlow had no engagement, and kindly consented to make up the party.

III.

I now come to a part of my story which it is very painful for me to write. A staunch supporter of my own sex, I have never yet admitted in argument, or even to myself, that women are in any way the mental inferiors of men, or the more likely to yield to sudden impulses. Yet how am I to explain what happened towards the close of this momentous evening except by admitting the influence of moonlight on the feminine mind? At any rate, this is what occurred.

Mr. Brownlow took his leave at a quarter to ten, the lateness of the hour being somewhat of a concession on his part, as I know that he makes it a rule to retire at ten precisely each evening. The night being fine and balmy, with the moon at the full, we accompanied him as far as the front gate. To my surprise, Mr. Endicott's motor-car was standing in the roadway. It looked a very smart little affair, made ostensibly to carry two, although I understood that it was possible to adjust another seat at the back—called, in motoring slang, a "dickey"—which would also accommodate two persons.

"What a lovely night!" said Estelle.

"Is it not?" I replied unguardedly.

"Just the night for a little spin," suggested Mr. Endicott.

"Oh, would not that be heavenly!" said Estelle.

"On the contrary," I observed, "I think it would be extremely foolish to

Although I lost no time in the descent, and even risked my neck in the desire to overtake them, they must have been down at least a whole minute before I rejoined them.

endanger one's lungs, to say nothing of one's life and limbs, by embarking on so rash an enterprise."

Mr. Endicott seemed surprised.

"D'you mean to say, Miss Griss, that you've never taken a drive in a motor by moonlight?"

"I most certainly have never done anything of the sort," I replied, "and, what is more, it seems to me extremely unlikely that I ever shall."

"Then you will miss one of the greatest pleasures in life," he said enthusiastically. "You can have no idea of the beauty of the country by moonlight until you've swept through it in a motor-car. Do let me persuade you, Miss Griss, to come for a very short run. Your niece could sit on the little seat I have at the back, if she has no objection. We need not be out more than half-an-hour."

Estelle joined her entreaties to his, but their combined eloquence could not have moved me. I attribute the whole disastrous affair to the influence of the moon. I can even now remember a strange thrill that ran through me as I looked at the moon, and thought of the white roads, and the dark woods, and the hills and valleys bathed in moonlight.

Like one in a dream, I found myself putting on my second-best bonnet, and securing it to my head, at Estelle's suggestion, by means of a veil. I also had the good sense to wear my largest and warmest cloak, and I insisted that Estelle should do the same, and also take with her a large rug which I use when I am travelling by train. A hot-water bottle, a blanket for my feet, and a little brandy in a flask in case of accidents, completed our equipment.

"Where would you like to go?" asked Mr. Endicott, with the air of one to whom the whole world lay open.

I mentioned a village some two miles distant as being a suitable spot for an excursion of this nature, and soon we were off. Broxholm was gone in a flash, and I did not even have time to point out a quaint carving over the door of the almshouses in which I felt sure that Mr. Endicott would be interested. We reached the village that I had mentioned whilst I was still explaining to him the conditions of life at the almshouses, and before I realised it, we were passing through the famous and much-dreaded Crowhurst Woods.

I say "much-dreaded" because, from time to time, terrible deeds have been committed in these woods. A farmer, on his way home from market, was once discovered lying in a ditch with a nasty cut on his forehead, and he declared that he had been set upon by a large band of masked men, who felled him to the ground and then robbed him of all his money. The uncharitable said that the farmer had taken too much to drink at the Red Lion, and that the masked men were creatures of his imagination, but his story was generally believed in Broxholm, and the woods have ever since been avoided at night by the cautious.

Still intoxicated—if I may use so vulgar a word in a purely poetical sense—by the moonlight, I allowed Mr. Endicott to drive me further and further from home until, at last, I was bound to admit that I had lost my bearings.

"Make your mind quite easy," he said. "I have an excellent bump of locality, and I'm sure to find my way home again. We will turn whenever you like."

"Then we had better turn at once," I replied firmly.

"Oh, not yet!" pleaded Estelle.

"We will take the next turning," said Mr. Endicott, "and come home by another route."

We soon wheeled off to the right, therefore, and struck a very beautiful road. I abandoned myself, now that we were safely heading for home, to the pleasure of the moment. It was certainly very delicious to pass through the country at such an hour and in such a way. I had never experienced anything of the kind in my life.

The villages and farms looked so picturesque and peaceful; the cornfields, with the sheaves dotted all over them, reminded me of a visit to the Royal Academy in the days when artists were not ashamed to represent simple scenes from nature; indeed, one might have been travelling through Fairyland itself.

I was suddenly recalled to my senses by passing into the darkness of overhanging trees. I had just recognised Crowhurst Woods when the motor-car slowed down, gave two or three convulsive little jumps, and then came to a dead stop.

"Is there anything the matter?" I asked anxiously of Mr. Endicott.

"Petrol," he said briefly.

"You mean that some petrol has got into the works?"

"I mean that there is none to get into the works. I'm afraid that we've run out."

"Is it essential to oil the works before we proceed any further?"

I thought I heard a snigger from Estelle at the back, but when I turned, she was looking perfectly grave and composed.

"It is extremely necessary," said Mr. Endicott, "to put some petrol into the tank. Until we do that, the car will not travel another inch."

"Then, my good sir, the sooner you apply this petrol to the tank, the better," I observed, with no little asperity.

"I would do so with pleasure," said Mr. Endicott, "but I have none with me. We must have travelled further than I intended."

IV.

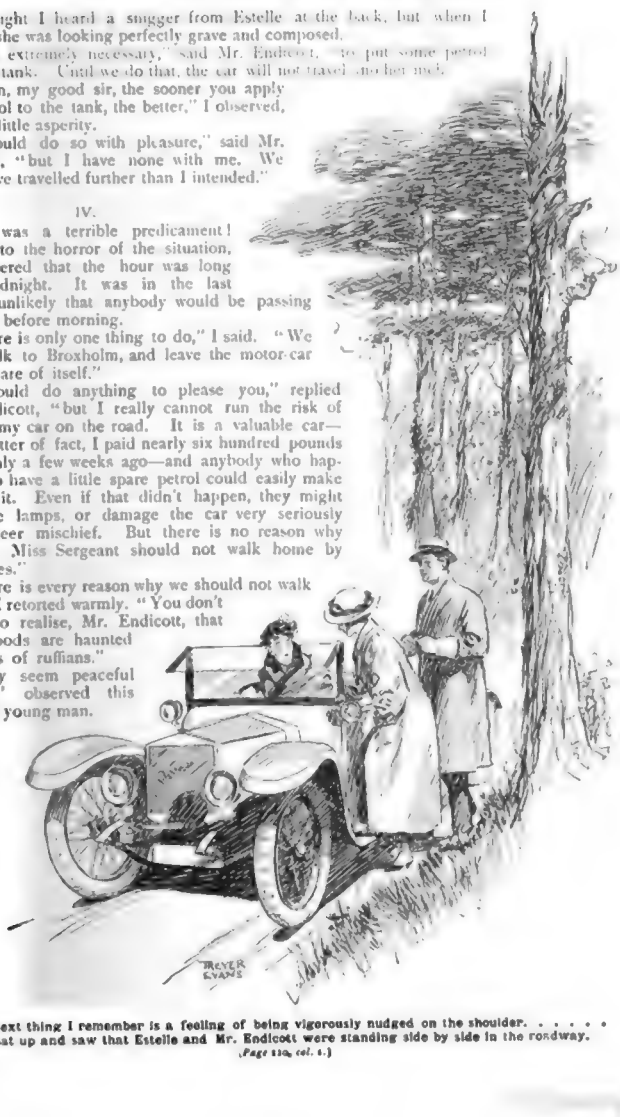
Here was a terrible predicament! To add to the horror of the situation, I discovered that the hour was long past midnight. It was in the last degree unlikely that anybody would be passing that way before morning.

"There is only one thing to do," I said. "We must walk to Broxholm, and leave the motor-car to take care of itself."

"I would do anything to please you," replied Mr. Endicott, "but I really cannot run the risk of leaving my car on the road. It is a valuable car—as a matter of fact, I paid nearly six hundred pounds for it only a few weeks ago—and anybody who happened to have a little spare petrol could easily make off with it. Even if that didn't happen, they might steal the lamps, or damage the car very seriously from sheer mischief. But there is no reason why you and Miss Sergeant should not walk home by yourselves."

"There is every reason why we should not walk home," I retorted warmly. "You don't appear to realise, Mr. Endicott, that these woods are haunted by gangs of ruffians."

"They seem peaceful enough," observed this ignorant young man.



The next thing I remember is a feeling of being vigorously nudged on the shoulder. . . . . I sat up and saw that Estelle and Mr. Endicott were standing side by side in the roadway.
(Page 119, col. 1.)

"Things are not always what they seem," I reminded him aptly. "It is equally impossible, therefore, for you to fetch the petrol and leave my niece and myself alone. I see no way out of this foolish and misguided escapade but to wait here until somebody appears who can be persuaded to fetch a sufficient quantity of this wretched oil, an I that may not be until the early hours of the morning."

"What fun!" cried Estelle.

"Your sense of humour, my dear child," I said, "has become strangely perverted since your deplorable visit to Hampstead. I see no fun in the situation whatever. You and Mr. Endicott are young and strong, but I may catch my death of cold."

"Oh, no, auntie, you won't do that. Let us wrap you up warmly in all the rugs, and then you can sip a little brandy, and perhaps drop off to sleep."

"A very good suggestion," said Mr. Endicott.

"I have no intention whatever of dropping off to sleep. I will certainly permit you to place another rug about my shoulders, and I may take a sip or two of the brandy, but I should never think of forgetting my duty as a chaperon by dropping off to sleep. Mr. Endicott," I continued, after they had done their best to render me secure from the damp chills of those awful woods, "had better take up his station by the side of the car. He will then be ready to spring upon any adversary who may approach. You, Estelle, will come here, and sit by me until daybreak."

Thus we arranged ourselves, and I settled down to face the long hours of the night in self-accusation. Nor did I omit to recite to myself one or two hymns and other sets of sacred verse of a humiliating nature.

The next thing I remember is a feeling of being vigorously nudged on the shoulder. I found myself in an almost prone position on the front seat of the car; I sat up and saw that Estelle and Mr. Endicott were standing side by side in the roadway. It was broad daylight.

"What is it?" I demanded. "Speak quickly! Are we attacked?"

"Worse than that," said Estelle.

Mr. Endicott nodded.

"Worse? What do you mean? What can be worse?"

"Scandal might be worse," replied Estelle; her face was pale, and her eyes very round.

"Scandal? I don't understand! What scandal? How can there be scandal?"

"You see, auntie," Estelle explained hurriedly, "you very soon dropped off to sleep, and began to push me out of the car with your knees. Thinking that it would be a shame to disturb your rest, I slipped out, and then you slid right down. I covered you over and made you all snug, and then I went back to the dickey."

"Well, what next, child?"

"Mr. Endicott walked up and down by the side of the car, just as you had arranged, until it began to get light. Then, as he was very tired, I thought that he might come and sit with me on the dickey, and so he did. We hadn't been there many minutes before old Gemley came along."

"Gemley?" I cried. There was good reason for my agitation. Gemley is well known in Broxholm as a poacher, a vagabond, and the greatest gossip in the place. If there is anything going forward that people wish to keep secret, Gemley is always the first to hear of it, and to noise it abroad.

"Nothing could have been more unfortunate," I said. "Still, he could see that I was with you; there was not so very much harm done. We shall be laughed at, but nothing worse."

"I'm afraid it *will* be worse," said Estelle.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you had slipped so far down on the seat, auntie, and I had covered you over so well with the rug, that old Gemley couldn't see you. Before I had the presence of mind to speak to him and explain matters, he had given us a horrid grin, and disappeared round the bend of the road. I don't know what he was doing out so early; I suppose he had been poaching."

My spirit was quite broken by this disaster and my weariness. I am ashamed to say that I shed a few tears. Estelle quickly came to me, and put her arms round my neck.

"Please don't cry, auntie," she said. "You can easily make everything all right. All you have to do is to let people know that Bryan and I are engaged."

"But you're nothing of the sort," I sobbed.

"Yes, Miss Griss," said Mr. Endicott, "we are. Your niece has very sweetly consented to become my wife. We want nothing to insure our happiness but your consent."

I flatter myself that I think as rapidly and acutely as most people, but the way out of this dilemma was a blank. If I gave my consent to the engagement, my plans for Estelle's future would be entirely upset. More important than that, Mr. Brownlow

would receive a severe shock from which he might never recover.

On the other hand, if I refused to give my consent, there would certainly be a very grave scandal in Broxholm. I know Broxholm, and I know that old rascal, Gemley. There is only one greater gossip than Gemley in Broxholm, and that is Miss Essington. The point, therefore, that I had to decide, and to decide at once, was this: Should I refuse my consent and trust to bribing Gemley to keep silent, or should I give my consent and set Miss Essington to out-talk Gemley?

Right, or wrongly, I decided on the latter course. But two very surprising things were still to happen. Both of these things gave me a great shock, and both of them served to show me how little we know, even the wisest and most observant amongst us, of human nature.

On leaving Miss Essington, I thought it as well to call at Gemley's cottage. I might still be in time to prevent him making mischief. Imagine my amazement when I learnt from his wife—whose statement was corroborated by the panel doctor—that Gemley was ill in bed, and had certainly not been out of the house for three days! So that the whole story had been concocted by Estelle and her shameless lover in the small hours of the morning, whilst I lay peacefully sleeping beneath the rug!

Alas, that love and duplicity should go hand in hand! It may even be possible that Mr. Endicott *intended* to run out of petrol at that precise point, or that we never ran out of petrol at all! . . .

The other shock was of a very different nature. It was administered by my dear Mr. Brownlow—or Horace, as I may now call him. I broke the news of the engagement to him as delicately as possible, after *matins*.

"You must not grieve overmuch," I said.

"Grieve!" he cried, taking one of my hands in both of his. "Why should I grieve? There is one, and one only, whom I love. Need I tell you her name? . . ."

Had it not been for the comparative publicity of the churchyard, I think I should have fainted. As it was, I allowed him to escort me as far as my house, and accepted him on the doorstep.

WHEN THE DUSTMAN COMES.

You never hear him creep upstairs,
As on he goes from floor to floor
Or come upon him unawares
Just peeping slyly round the door;
But when your eyes begin to close
Because, it seems, they simply must,
You know the reason is he throws
In them a sort of sleepy dust.

At chamber doors he never knocks,
And your convenience seldom suits;
Upon his feet are sleeping socks,
Perhaps, instead of shoes or boots;
And so—at least, that's what I think—
He always takes you by surprise,
And then you are obliged to wink
And blink, as well as rub your eyes.

To-night I want to sit up late,
Till half-past nine, or even ten.
He generally comes at eight,
Or even earlier, but when
This time he tries to make me sleep
He'll find, to his complete surprise,
I've got Dad's motor-specs. to keep
The dust from getting in my eyes!

Ada Leonora Harris.

PICTURE PARAGRAPHS

The Belgian dogs are as brave as the soldiers, and do invaluable service in drawing machine-guns on to the field of battle.

The Editor will be Pleased to Purchase Photographs of an Interesting and Out-of-the-Way Nature. All Photographs should be Accompanied by a Short Description.

THE DOGS OF WAR.

The dogs of Belgium have won well-deserved honour in the present war, and have proved invaluable in transporting the machine-guns on to the scene of battle.

On one occasion they rendered unexpected service to the Belgians who were charging the Germans with fixed bayonets. The dogs rushed, biting and snapping at the enemy, who, thinking they were mad, opened their ranks, thus giving passage to the Belgians.

Civilians driven from their homes have also had cause to be grateful to their dogs, who have helped in transporting their household belongings to places of safety.

Photo. From Photographic Agency.

Here they are dragging one of the guns to a fresh position, and stepping it out as gaily as their masters.

A trenching tool harness specially designed to spare "Tommy" the necessity of adding these tools to his already heavy load.

LIGHTENING "TOMMY'S" LOAD.

At the best of times "Tommy" has usually a pretty heavy load to carry in the way of equipment, and when intrenching work is imminent, the necessary tools form a very considerable addition to his burden.

An ingenious corporal in the Artists' Rifles hit upon the idea of a special harness, designed so that the spades and other implements could be carried by the horses instead of by the men. The plan proved quite successful, and Corporal Edge, who is seen standing at the horse's head, has every reason to be proud of his invention, for on trench digging may depend the whole success of a battle

BRAVO, COLLET!

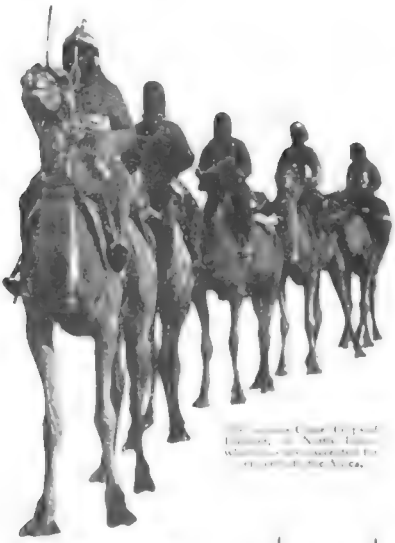
To the British naval flying men belongs the distinction of being the first to cross the German frontier and bombard one of the enemy's towns.

It was Flight-Lieutenant C. A. Collet who flew over the town of Düsseldorf and dropped three bombs on the sheds in which the Zeppelin airships were housed. The intrepid airman, who approached within 600 feet of the sheds, had a very narrow escape, for his machine was struck by a projectile, but he was happily uninjured.

The fact that the weather was extremely misty at the time of the flight makes the performance all the more remarkable. Little wonder that General French was moved to pay an eloquent tribute to our brave flying men when they include such aviators as this daring flight-lieutenant.

The airman needs courage of the highest order, for he works practically alone, and without the moral support which the presence of others gives.

The first British aviator to cross the German frontier was Flight-Lieutenant Collet, who dropped three bombs on the Zeppelin sheds at Düsseldorf.



FIGHTERS ALL!

THERE are no finer soldiers in the world than the native Indian troops who are fighting side by side with the British "Tommy" against the Germans. They have already proved their mettle in some of the hardest fighting India has known, and the opportunity afforded them of adding to their laurels on the battlefields of Europe has been hailed with great satisfaction.

The Indian Lancers chosen for service on the Continent are a splendid body of men, and the Kaiser's smartest troops will find such soldiers as those of the Bombay Bodyguard more than a match for them.

The Indian soldiers are supplied with khaki uniform for action; the military races wear turbans for the most part, each clan adopting some distinctive method of arranging the cloth about the head.

The ovation the Indian troops received at Marseilles should do much to hearten them for the tremendous struggle before them.

CAMELS FOR THE FRONT.

THE way in which the Indian princes have rallied round the flag, and the munificent generosity they [illegible] England's cause, has been one of the most comforting features of the [illegible]

Among the many offers made to the British Government, that of the Maharajah of Bikaner is one of the most striking, for this Indian potentate [illegible] The camel [illegible] five hundred [illegible] equal number [illegible] Some of the [illegible] robes of yellow and green, while others are clothed in chain armour.

Men of the Bombay Bodyguard who will fight side by side with British soldiers.

ROMANCE

Thy face is far from this our war.
Our call and counter cry:
I may not find thee quick and kind,
Nor know thee till I die.
The True Romance.

By Owen Oliver.

Last year I came on the Broads with Hallett (said Maitland). You must have met him in the old days. Yes, Tom Powell's cousin. That's the man. He's quite a decent fellow, but no good in a boat. He can't shake off civilisation and live like a primitive, primitively. He preferred studying human nature ashore to studying water nature aboard. He would spend a whole evening listening to yokels discussing village politics in a country bar. He was doing that at Martham when we were there, and I got sick of the petty jabber and left him, and came back to the boat—the *Norice*; sister to this—and smoked and fished.

It was a dark evening, much like to-night. We were tied up just by the Ferry. It's the nearest place to Martham. There's nothing to see there except an oversized church, but he liked to be near somewhere, and the gnats aren't so bad as higher up, though it's well to sprinkle a little ammonia. You don't often get them here. Too clean for the brutes. Where was I?

I'd come back and was fishing, and half dozing, when a lusty bite woke me with a start, and I dropped my pipe in the river. I thought perhaps it would float, but I dared not swim for it, because the dyke is full of reeds, as you know. So I paddled about in the dinghy for a bit, looking for it. Then I gave it up, came aboard, and went forward to get another pipe from my bag in the fore-peak. We kept the luggage and lumber there, just as you and I do.

I found the hatch half off, and abused myself for an untidy slacker to have left it so. I let myself down by my hands, and felt about in the dark for my bag. I got hold of something warm and live—a woman! She fluttered and panted, and tried to push me away, but I grasped her wrists.

"What the deuce!" I began, and she gave a faint cry

"Don't call out!" she begged. "Don't! Oh, don't!" She struggled like a sheep. I don't know if you've ever caught one? I have, when I was a boy.

"That's all very well, young lady," I said severely—I judged her young and educated from her voice—"but what the—the dickens are you doing here?"

"Don't ask me," she pleaded. "I can't tell you. I can't, sir. You are a gentleman. I can hear that. Won't you let me take refuge here for a little while? I am so helpless, so hopeless! Won't you have the chivalry to trust me? I wouldn't touch your things. I am not a thief. Indeed I am not. You are holding my arms so roughly. You hurt!"

"I beg your pardon," I said, and released her. "I don't want to hurt you, but I must have some explanation before I can let you go."

"I don't want to go," she protested. "I want to stay here."

"But, really!" I remonstrated, "that is ridiculous. I can't listen to such nonsense."

"If you make me go I shall throw myself into the river," she declared wildly. "There is nothing else to do. Can't you trust me, and let me stay here to-night? I would go to-morrow when you get to some quiet place. No one would ever know."

"I am not alone," I told her. "I have a companion who will be coming back from Martham soon; and, besides——"

I was going to add that the situation was compromising for a young lady, and then it occurred to me that I was rather rash in crediting her with being such, and that I had better see what sort of creature she was.

I scratched a match, but it failed to light, and she clutched at my hands excitedly.

"Don't! Don't!" she entreated in a faint whisper. "If anyone should see me——"

"No one will see you," I assured her. "You are right under the deck. If anyone passed he would merely think that I was lighting a candle to look among my stores. It's no use trying to hold me. I am going to have a look at you."

I struck the match, and saw her crouching in the bows, a girl of nineteen or twenty, dressed in blue serge with white facings. I could not judge her height, but she was evidently big, nearly as big as I. In spite of her size she looked very childish—childish and soft and frightened. I want you to understand that she wasn't a bad hussy. Well, she didn't look it. I could no more have said a wrong word to her than I could to one of your sisters.

I have never seen any other girl really like her. She was so big, and yet so dainty, as if a delicate, pretty little woman grew tall and filled out without losing any of her refinement. What a mess one makes of description! I won't try any more. I think she had the finest eyes I ever saw, big and wild. I *hate* to think of her as a big, lovely, sweet girl-lady. That's the worst of it!

We sat staring at each other by the light of the vesta. Just as it was going out I bowed to her.

"I beg your pardon," I said. "I didn't think you were what you are. You needn't be afraid. I recognise you as a lady, and shall treat you as such. Don't you think you had better trust me, and tell me what has happened? Then I will consider how I can help you, as if you were a foolish little sister. Well, a big one! Do you come from one of the other yachts?"

"No," she said. "No, I am so afraid that you won't believe me if I tell you the truth."

"I am afraid that I shall!" I declared. "So tell me the truth, like a good girl. You poor frightened child! Where did you come from?"

"From a private asylum," she said—I could feel her shiver—"about two miles out of the village. They put me there—my guardians—to get my money. I am not mad. I am *not* mad! Oh, do believe me! They say anyone can tell from their eyes. Light another match and look at mine."

I lit another match. I was in no doubt about her sanity, but I wanted to look at her. I wish now I hadn't. I'll never get the look of her out of my mind. A soft, pretty, appealing creature that you'd die rather than let anything hurt. I—give me a cigarette before I go on.

"You aren't mad, poor girl," I said, "and you shan't go back there if I can stop it, if I can stop it at any cost whatever. Trust me!"

I pressed her hand in the dark, and she gave a sob and kissed mine. Such warm, childish lips!

"You are good—good—good!" she cried. "I do trust you. I do! And you will trust me, won't you?"

"Yes," I promised, and then she told me the rest of her story.

I need not go through all that. The main point was that she wanted to get to her uncle in Paris. She had plenty of money for the

journey, she said—thirty pounds sewn up in her dress. At present he believed the report of her guardians that she was mad. They were her father's brothers, and he was her mother's. But if she could see him, and convince him that she was sane, she had no doubt whatever of his ability and willingness to protect her. He was a hot-tempered old Indian colonel, but he was always good to her, and she wasn't afraid of him "any more than I am afraid of you now!"

She wanted me to take her to some large town, such as Yarmouth, fearing that she would be identified at any of the small villages, and let her land there and go away, if she could. She was afraid that, even there, her chances were poor, as they would doubtless circulate a description of her appearance and dress, unless I could get her a new rig-out.

"I'd never do that without giving you away," I said. "I know nothing about ladies' costumes. But, if I could keep you hidden and get you to Yarmouth, we could easily manage a disguise. You're nearly as big as I. You could wear some of my things. If you are prepared to cut off your hair, you could pass for a big lad, I think."

"I'd cut off my *hand*," she cried, "to escape! Just think what it means to me! It's my life! They will kill me if I am captured. I know they will! You can hide me here, can't you?"

"I don't know," I said slowly. "There's a man on board with me, as I told you. I am afraid he's the sort who would insist on giving you up. He holds that the law is always right, and——"

"But you won't?" she implored. "You won't?" She clutched at my hand again. When I sit in the dark I seem to feel her soft fingers.

"I'd be hanged first!" I cried.

"I'll be hanged—as bad as hanged, if you do," she said, and then she burst out crying. I've thought of her crying many a time since. She was so young and so easily frightened.

I'm all right. I'll go on in a minute.

We agreed that I shouldn't tell Hallett. He scarcely ever went to the fore-peak, and I thought I could keep him away. She promised to sit right up in the bows, and I could put the jib over her at night and the well-awning by day, in case he looked down the hatch. I gave her some cushions and a rug and some bread and meat and coffee before Hallett returned, fussy and full of conversation.

"There's quite an excitement in the village," he said, speaking in his loud way, so that the girl must have heard. "They're hunting for an escaped something or other. Some say she's a lunatic, and others a murderess, and the landlord's wife says she is a he and a highwayman! You can understand the way that legends used to grow if you listen to these rustics. They make a dozen conjectures about everything, and they are as likely to hand down the conjecture as the truth to posterity."

He prosed on like that for an hour before we went to bed. When I was quite sure that he was asleep, I went out on deck, and whispered down the half-opened hatch to ask the girl if she was all right.

"Yes," she whispered. "All right! God bless you! I trust you entirely, Mr. Maitland."

"You may," I assured her. "God bless *you*! I will give you some breakfast in the morning while he has gone for the milk. He always fetches it."

"I am glad it wasn't he who found me," she said, and even laughed a little. "He doesn't sound like—like my kind friend! I haven't had a friend for so long. It is nice. Now go! Good-night!"

"Good-night," I said. "Sleep and don't worry. I'll look after you."

Then I went back to the cabin and slept till six in the morning. I went and whispered down the hatch, but the girl did not answer. I listened and knew from her breathing that she was asleep. I cleared up a bit and put the water on the spirit stove before Hallett roused.

"Here!" he called from the cabin. "It's no use boiling up yet. I've a long way to go for the milk this morning. I shan't get back in half-an-hour."

"Hurry up then!" I advised. "We can't have our usual dip, you know. The reeds are like rubber snakes! So you can dress. I want to get off sharp. There's a good breeze."

"You are a glutton for sailing!" he protested, but he dressed and went off. I made some tea and boiled a couple of eggs and cut some bread-and-butter and took them to the girl. She called me her "good angel"!

"You do more than make me safe," she said. "You make me comfy and happy. You're sure that you don't think I'm a lunatic?"

She leant forward a little from the dark bows to peep up at me. Man, she was a pretty creature!

"I'll prove it by asking you to be friends,

when you've escaped," I said. "You will give me your address to write to, won't you? Eat your breakfast. I must wash the things before he comes back."

"I can't talk with my mouth full!" She laughed. It was strange how her fears seemed to have gone. "I don't know what my address will be."

"I know mine! Will you write to me?"

"Why, yes! When I am not a lunatic you can come and see—uncle!" She laughed mischievously. "There! I've eaten it like a wolf. You have given me the nicest breakfast I ever had. When you come to uncle's I will give you tea. I wish I could wash up for you. Then we could talk."

"I'll do it on the deck just here. Sit near the hatch where I can see my little friend."

"I'm not."

"Not my friend?"

"I am that; and I always shall be. But I'm not little. I'm big; as big as you!"

"You'll have to be to fill out my clothes. It's lucky you're not a midget. I'll pass you down a suit the next time he's away."

"And a looking-glass, and scissors to cut my hair?"

"I haven't scissors. I'll buy a pair if I can."

"I shall be so frightened while you are gone. If he should find me! I don't like him. He's a prig!"

"Don't look your host in the mouth, miss! Can you cut your hair with a razor?"

"Ugh!" She gave a little cry. "I—I couldn't touch a razor." She shivered. I remembered *that* afterwards.

"I'll be barber, if I get a chance," I said. "I can see him coming. Let me have the jib. I'll fetch the awning and put it over you. Sit right up in the bows. Let me lift you. There! Good-bye. We *are* friends, aren't we, big girl?"

"Oh! We *are!*" she declared.

I seemed to hear her say that all the morning. She had such a pretty voice.

Hallett had seen the cow milked, and he harangued about milking and the price of dairy produce till we had breakfasted, and were getting under way. You know the sort of chap! He took an interest in everything that was of no possible concern to him.

We were beating up against wind and tide all the morning, and the wind was so strong that I didn't think we could get to Yarmouth that evening even with the tide. Anyhow, there was no decent place to put up past Acle. So I anchored up to the bank there, two or three hundred yards from the bridge, on the same side as the inn. It's a quiet place, and ours was the only boat. After lunch Hallett said, if we couldn't get on, he'd like to go to the station—it's two miles off—and try to buy a paper. I agreed, and he went.

As soon as he had gone I took some lunch to Ethel. That was her name—Ethel Dean. Well, that was the name that she gave me. Then I went down in the fore-peak, and cut off her hair with the razor. It was an awkward job, and she didn't much like it; covered her eyes with her hands all the time. We were very close together in the little fore-peak. When it was done—I made a rough job of it, and her head looked untidy enough—she almost cried at the sight of herself in the glass. She looked so ugly, she said.

"Oh, Ethel!" I cried. "You are so beautiful! I wonder if you would think I was taking advantage of you if I said what I shall say when I meet you again. . . .?"

She was silent for a time. When she spoke her voice was very grave.

"I do not think," she said, "I could ever think ill of you, but I shall like to think that you respected me here, though. I shall be so glad if we meet again."

"Yes, Ethel," I said, and I bent and kissed the fingers of her right hand. It was a little hand for such a big girl. It didn't look strong enough to— Wait while I fill my pipe. Where have I put the confounded thing? In my hand? So it is!

"I'll get you my best suit of clothes," I said; "at least, the best I have here. You'd better change before Hallett comes back. If he did look down the hatch and saw you it wouldn't be so suspicious then."

"But he would recognise the clothes," she pointed out. "If they were an old suit, and he didn't know them, I could pretend I was a poor stowaway boy, who wanted to get to Yarmouth."

"By Jove!" I cried. "I've an old suit that he hasn't seen. I brought it for dirty weather. Dress in that, Ethel, and I can say you are a boy who wants to go to Yarmouth, and I've given you a passage on condition that you wash and cook. Will you?"

"I can't cook a bit," she said, "but I can wash up. We can talk better then, can't we? I'm afraid my complexion isn't very

Then I went down in the fore-peak and cut off her hair with the razor. It was an awkward job, and she didn't much like it; covered her eyes with her hands all the time.

poor-boy! I'll have a dirty face. Well, it is dirty!"

She laughed. The curious thing is that she had a gay, light-hearted laugh. Sometimes I think—Heavens! If I could stop thinking!

She dressed up in the old things, and smeared some dust on her face. I thought she would look like a boy—to Hallett. I suppose she did. He didn't suspect anything, but he hoped piously that "the young rascal" was honest. He told me a dozen stories about people who had employed strangers and been taken in.

We decided not to go on that day, but to try to reach Yarmouth with the tide early the next morning, starting at daybreak—about a quarter-to-four. Hallett had found "a wonderfully intelligent signalman" at Acle and he had promised to show him how the signals were worked, if he went to the box in the evening, when the station-master would be out of the way.

"I suppose you'll stop and moon about on the boat?" he said before he went. "You're a queer chap, Maitland. People don't seem to interest you. Now if *I* were staying here this evening I should talk to that hulking boy, and try to realise how life looks through the eyes of a country lout. The proper study of mankind isn't fishes!"

"No," I said. "No! I daresay I *will* talk to the boy. He's a fine handsome chap!"

"He's big enough," Hallett admitted; "and he isn't bad looking—rather effeminate to my taste—but I doubt if he's honest. He wanted to tidy up the cabin, but I said no. Mind you lock it up, if you leave him here alone."

"I won't leave him alone," I promised.

"That's all right. Hi, Nokes!" (That was the name I had given her). "Can you clean brown shoes?"

"Yes, sir." Ethel came and took his shoes and cleaned them. It made me feel as though I'd like to kick Hallett, but she did not seem to mind, and whistled at her work, like a boy. The tune was not very suitable for a young yokel, however. It was *Träumerei*. I tried to catch her eye to stop her, but couldn't.

"Where did you hear that tune, Nokes?" Hallett asked presently, and she stopped abruptly.

"One of those things that play when you put a penny in, sir," she said readily. "I spent threepence on it, at the fair, but nobody can tell me the words."

Hallett gave a long explanation of the piece, and told Nokes that he had a good ear for music, and he never knew anyone quite bad who had. He also expressed satisfaction with the shoes, and gave Nokes sixpence. He is good-natured enough. There is really nothing against him, except that he's a bore.

At last he went, and Ethel and I washed up the tea things. I didn't want her to work, but she insisted.

"It would look suspicious if I didn't," she said, "and I should lose the very, very great pleasure of working for you. If I said truly what I hope for most, it would be that I may do something great for you some day."

"I shall ask something great of you, Ethel, when we meet again."

"Ah, when!" She sighed. "Somehow to-night I am full of fears. When you are very happy, don't you always feel afraid?"

"Are you very happy this evening, Ethel?"

"Yes. You mustn't look at me like that. If anyone should see—I am in danger still, you know, and you mustn't say things to me while I am in your charge. And I mustn't let you while I am a lunatic, or Boy Nokes! I don't think Boy Nokes must stay in the well with his master. Boy Nokes doesn't mind owning you as master! Fish, and then it won't look so suspicious. I can sit a little way off and fish, too. Only don't tell Boy Nokes to put on the bait, or take off the fish, please, kind master!"

I fished till it was dusk, and she pretended to fish. We talked softly. I would like to say that her conversation was that of a very good and pure-minded woman. Presently it grew dusk, and she washed her face, saying that it was no use being dirty when no one could see, and we walked on the bank together. When it was dark we went and sat on the edge of the boat, with our feet on the bank. Our shoulders grazed at first; then they touched gently, and then a little harder.

"When we meet again," I began, and she sobbed. I turned her face to mine, and found that she was crying.

"Ah, my dear!" she cried, "I do not think we shall ever meet again! They will catch me, and I—I shall die!"

I drew her head on my shoulder, and put my arm round her. We sat so for an hour. We said very little, but I kissed her many times. When I asked her she kissed me, but never unasked.

At the end of the time, when we heard Hallett's footsteps, I told her my address, and she promised to write, and to tell me where to write to her. I had wished to take her to Paris, but she held strongly that my company would increase her risk in many ways, among others by arousing Hallett's suspicions. I thought she was right, little as I liked her going alone and unprotected. I wonder, if I had gone with her, whether—Where was I? Yes.

Hallett came back. I went forward once afterwards to tell Nokes something about the breakfast. The hatch was open a few inches, and she put her lips to the opening for me. The last time!

The wind was more favourable the next morning. We got down to Yarmouth about eight, just at slack low tide. I had planned to have a few moments alone with her when I went to the fore-peak to lower the mast for the bridges, but I had to let Hallett do that. The wind was awkward, and there were several wherries near us, so I dared not leave the helm.

We stopped at the Corporation Yacht Quay. You know that. She went ashore slouching along like a country lad, turned, and touched her cap to us rather awkwardly.

"It's a pity you aren't more interested in people," Hallett said sadly. "That was quite a nice lad. I've looked all round, and I haven't missed anything. Have you?"

I shook my head. I couldn't speak just then, for the missing of *her*. Presently I turned to Hallett.

"I want a big sail to-day," I said sharply. "Let's run back with the tide. We'll get right up to Hickling and make a record day's journey."

"Good!" he agreed eagerly. "Good!"

He didn't care much for sailing, but he cared much for a record. You know the sort of man!

We got up to Hickling quite early in the

afternoon, and Hallett, in his thirst for the record run, suggested going back to Martham. We reached there in the dusk. He said, as he'd humoured me all day, I must humour him by walking up to the village with him, and we'd have a bit of supper there.

On the way we met a villager whom Hallett recognised. They began to talk about the woman hunt of two nights before. There was no doubt who she was now, the man said. The police notices were up, and it was in all the papers. She was a big, good-looking young woman, as tall as "this gent" (he indicated me), dressed in serge. He knew her well enough by sight.

She was Mrs. Merst, wife of old Farmer Merst at Five Mile Farm, and old enough to be her grandfather. He had kept her close for money, and they quarrelled about that, and her carryings on with a farm-servant. She had killed him as he slept in an arm-chair; cut his throat with a razor!

I kept saying that over and over to myself when I came to from the faint. I went down suddenly in the road, Hallett said. He ascribed my faintness to too much interest in the water, and too little interest in humanity!

I wouldn't look at a paper for weeks, but I heard the case spoken of. They caught her. If it hadn't been for the farm-servant—there was no doubt about him, but he had nothing to do with the murder—I think I'd have been fool enough to go and see her. The night before the—the end, I almost wished I had.

She was such—such a soft, clinging young thing, and so—so frightened. And they hanged her. God have mercy upon us! That's romance!

THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

I think it was bought at the Church bazaar,
As most enigmatical objects are,
By our rich, benevolent maiden aunt,
Perhaps you can say what it's for; I can't.
Myself, I find it is best by far
To say: "Oh, auntie, how kind you are!
What a beautiful Christmas present!"

Still, it has its uses; there's Cousin May,
You would have to send her a gift, anyway;
And she's quarrelled for years with our rich
Aunt Jane,
No fear the thing would come round
again.
We will pass it on to our Cousin May,
In plenty of time for Christmas Day.

She will pass it on to our Cousin Kate,
Who, the very same night—if it's not too
late—
Will pass it on to our Aunt Eliza,
Who will call on Aunt Jane and greatly
surprise her,
By handing over the very gift:
"With greetings; December the twenty-fifth."

. . . . . .

This awkward incident happens at times
In the best sort of families; hence these
rhymes,
To warn you that when you receive again
That circulator from dear Aunt Jane,
And wish it to circulate no more,
You should send it to someone in Singapore.

T. O'Meara

CAP AND BELLS

QUITE IMPOSSIBLE!

"Can you stop at the Ritz?" asked a grey-haired old lady in a Piccadilly motor-bus yesterday.

"No, ma'am," said the conductor with a grin, "not on 5s. 6d. a day, ma'am."

* * * * *

"LET'S PRETEND!"

LITTLE DOROTHY: "Oh, mother, what a pretty dress! Do wear it to-night."

MOTHER: "No, dearie, not to-night. This is to wear when ladies and gentlemen come to dinner."

LITTLE DOROTHY: "Oh, but mother, can't we pretend just for once that daddy is a gentleman?"

* * * * *

A GOOD TIP REQUIRED.

An hotel guest took a kindly interest in a bright-faced page-boy, who had answered his calls very promptly.

"What is your name, my boy?" he inquired.

"They call me 'Billiard-cue,'" replied the youth.

"'Billiard-cue!' And why is that?"

"Because I work so much better with a good tip, sir."

BROUGHT UP WITH CARE.

"Were you carefully brought up, my boy?" asked the merchant of the applicant for a situation.

"Yes, sir; I came up in the lift," said the respectful youth.

* * * * *

HE NEEDED CHANGE.

"I cannot understand," observed the magistrate, "how a respectably brought up young man, even though a little weak-minded, could have committed this rash act." He turned to the prisoner. "What in the world induced you to snatch the prosecutor's purse?" he asked.

The vacant-eyed youth in the dock grinned feebly.

"Please, your Worship, I thought the change might do me good," he giggled.

* * * * *

A COLD RECEPTION.

It was the custom of a certain choir on Christmas Eve to sally forth and sing carols at the houses of various members of the congregation. They were generally well received, and in addition to gifts of money, were often treated to light refreshments.

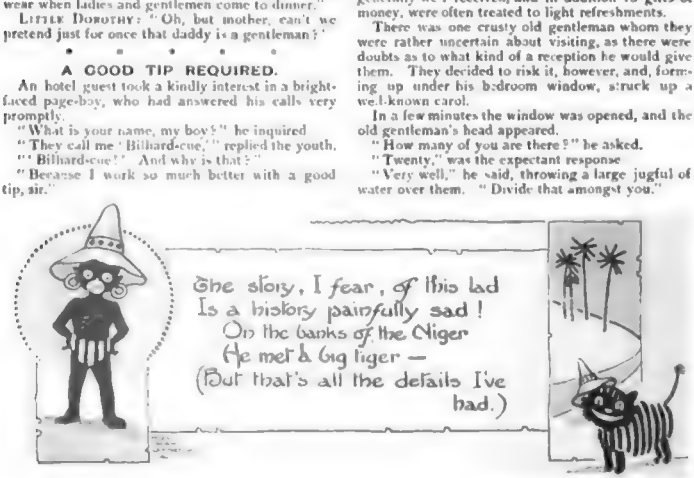
There was one crusty old gentleman whom they were rather uncertain about visiting, as there were doubts as to what kind of a reception he would give them. They decided to risk it, however, and, forming up under his bedroom window, struck up a well-known carol.

In a few minutes the window was opened, and the old gentleman's head appeared.

"How many of you are there?" he asked.

"Twenty," was the expectant response.

"Very well," he said, throwing a large jugful of water over them. "Divide that amongst you."


The story, I fear, of this lad
Is a history painfully sad!
On the banks of the Niger
He met a big tiger —
(But that's all the details I've had.)

COVERED WITH BLOOD.

A War Story.

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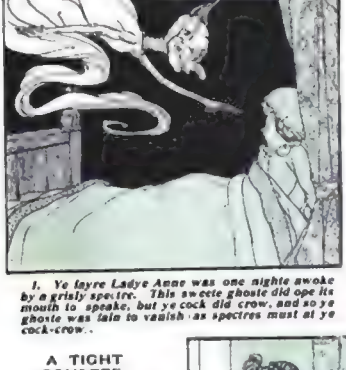
A Lyttel Tayle of a Ghoste and a Mighty Secret.



1. Ye fayre Ladye Anne was one nighte awoke by a grisly spectre. This sweete ghoste did ope its mouth to speake, but ye cock did crow, and so ye ghoste was fain to vanish as spectres must at ye cock-crow.

A TIGHT SQUEEZE.

A bashful young couple, who were evidently very much in love, entered a crowded tram-car the other day.

"Do you suppose we can squeeze in here?" he asked, looking doubtfully at her blushing face.

"Don't you think, dear, we had better wait until we get home?" was the low, embarrassed reply.

* * *

WHERE HE SCORED.

IRATE VISITOR: "I call this a downright fraud! You advertise on your bills 'The Most Remarkable Dwarf in the World,' and he is over five feet high!"

BLAND SHOWMAN: "Exactly so! That is what's so remarkable about him—he's the tallest dwarf on record!"

* * * * *

UNFORTUNATE BOTH WAYS.

ETHEL: "Do you think it unlucky to postpone a wedding day?"

MAUD: "It may be, but if you don't postpone it you will be married, so what are you to do?"

* * * *

MAN v. MILLINERY.

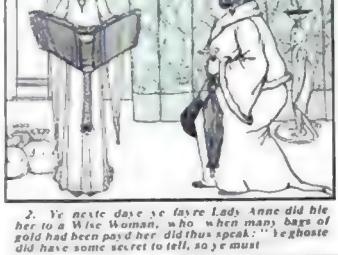
"Madam, I must request you to remove your hat," remarked the polite theatre attendant.

The lady smiled grimly.

"Does my hat annoy the little man behind me?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then you'll find it much easier to remove him."



2. Ye neate daye ye fayre Ladye Anne did hie her to a Wise Woman, who when many bags of gold had been payd her did thus speak: "Ye ghoste did have some secret to tell, so ye must

A CALL TO ARMS.

Young Cuthbert Corks was quite a "nut"!
Though only twenty-one
He longed to wield a bayonet,
And trifle with a gun.
His football and the racing news
Had lost their erstwhile charms,
And he, like all the nicest boys,
Obeyed the call to arms.

But when he went to say good-bye
To charming Mabel Squeers,
And she had bathed his uniform
In broken-hearted tears,
He lingered gladly in the hall
To soothe her wild alarms,
'Twas she who, stealing to his side,
Obeyed the call to arms.

D. R.

* * * * *

TOO MUCH OF A BEAT.

A candidate for the police force was being asked a few questions prior to being enrolled.

"Now, what is the distance between York and London?"

"I don't know exactly, sir," he replied, "but if that's going to be my beat I don't think I'll join the force."

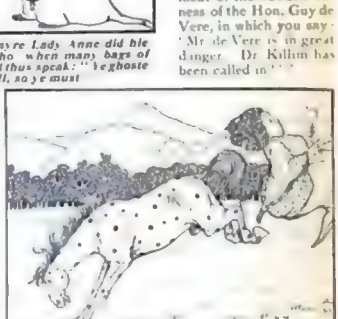
* * *

ENTER—DR. KILLIM.

"I want to know," cried the irate visitor, "whether that item of yours in regard to me is an intentional slur or merely editorial stupidity?"

"What are you talking about, my dear sir, and who are you?" asked the editor.

"I'm Dr. Killim, and I refer to your announcement of the sudden illness of the Hon. Guy de Vere, in which you say 'Mr. de Vere is in great danger. Dr. Killim has been called in.'"



3. —pull a hayre from ye tayle of ye spotted horse." This did ye Ladye Anne do, but ye horse did villely hoofe her, and lame went she for evermore.

A WORD OF EXPLANATION.

A very mild North-of-England vicar had for some time been displeased with the quality of the milk served him. At length he determined to remonstrate with his milkman for supplying such weak stuff. He began mildly:

"I've been waiting to see you in regard to the quality of milk with which you are serving me."

"Yes, sir," uneasily answered the tradesman.

"I only wanted to say," continued the minister, "that I use the milk for dietary purposes exclusively, and not for christening."

* * * * *

AN INVISIBLE QUANTITY.

One day as Pat halted at the top of the river-bank, a man famous for his inquisitive mind stopped and asked:

"How long have you hauled water for the village my good man?"

"Tin years, sor."

"Ah! How many loads do you take in a day?

"From tin to fifteen, sor."

"Ah, yes? Now I have a problem for you. How much water at this rate have you hauled in all?"

The driver of the watering-cart jerked his thumb backward toward the river and replied:

"All the water yez don't see there now, sor."

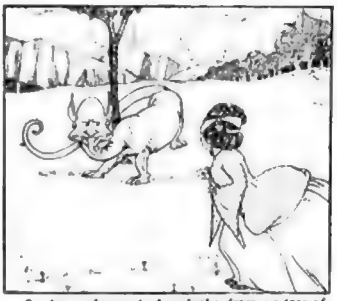
* * *

THE DOMESTIC POINT OF VIEW.

HUSBAND (looking up from his paper): "Our men put up a splendid fight, but the enemy got their range remarkably quickly."

YOUNG WIFE (feelingly): "Poor fellows! however did they manage about cooking their dinner?"

6. "Tell me," quoth our Anne, "ye mightie secret, that I may be repayd for my trouble." "I was but going to say," quoth the ghoste, "that ye nyghte was fine!" And thereupon did he vanish.



5. An apple must she plucke from ye tree of Hum, which was guarded by a monster who was not gentle in hys ways. With these things made she a spell to call up ye ghoste.

A NASTY SLIP.

AUTHOR: "You must be more careful about this musical comedy."

STAGE MANAGER: "Why?"

AUTHOR: "Last night you played the third act before the first. Nobody noticed it, but still it shows bad management, you know."

* * *

NO PAYMENT REQUIRED.

In a certain town in the North of England an old couple were driving in their cart down a steep hill.

Suddenly the horse took fright, and the terrified old lady exclaimed in excited tones:

"Eh, John, I'd give a sovereign to be out of this!"

"Ke p th' brass in th' pocket; tha'll be out for nought in a minute!" replied her husband—and she was.

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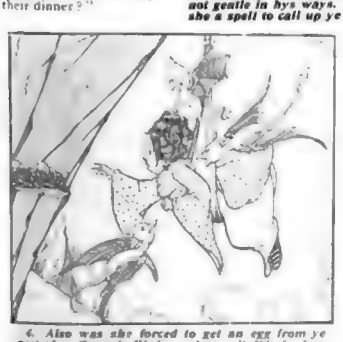


4. Also was she forced to get an egg from ye nest of ye Snaggle Birde, and over it did she lose a hyre eye, which pleased her not.

POOR JONES!

Mr. Jones doesn't live in clover;
Though his wife must be well over
Forty.

She has lessons from Herr Tjwusick—
Poor Jones!—in vain her craze for music
Fought he.

Her singing's really far from clever;
Her voice is squeaky, and forever
Forte.

Jones each day is getting thinner:
He has singing now for lunch, for dinner,
For tea.

Elsie Skeet.

"GET OUT AND GET UNDER."

A lunatic-asylum keeper in a large watering-place was showing the regulation inquisitive visitor about the building. A large room with twenty cots was reached, but the place seemed empty.

"This is where the mad chauffeurs are kept," said the keeper.

"Oh, is it?" asked the visitor. "But where are they?"

"Well, you can't see 'em," the guide replied. "They're all under the beds examining the springs."

* * * * *

RATHER INVOLVED.

They met on a bridge. Each held out his hand, and they shook, and instantly realised that they were utter strangers. Had not one of them been a genuine Hibernian the situation might have been embarrassing.

"Begorra, that's quare," said Pat. "When we wor so far off that we couldn't see aich other I thought it was you an' you thought it was me, and now we're here together it's naythur of us."

IN FOR IT ANYHOW!

The teacher was telling her class the story of the wolf and the lamb. When she had finished she said:

"You see, children, if the lamb had been good and sensible he would not have been eaten by the wolf."

"No," said one small boy reflectively, then added: "but he'd have been eaten by us, wouldn't he?"

* * * * *

A FATAL SLIP.

"Ah, sir," he said sadly, "I've seen changes. I was a doctor once with a large practice, but owing to one little slip, my patients began to leave me, and now I'm just living from hand to mouth."

"What was the slip?" was the natural question.

"Well, sir," replied the other, "in filling in a death certificate for a patient who had died, I absent-mindedly signed my name in the space headed 'Cause of death.'"

***RICH UNCLE** (whose small nephew has brought him a Christmas present): "Well, and what did your papa say, Johnnie?"*
***JOHNNIE** (whose truthfulness is his strong point): "He said we was very nearly forgetting the old butler this Christmas."*

THE ONLY WAY OUT.

NEW LODGER (sarcastically): "Is this all the soap there is in the room?"

LANDLADY (decidedly): "Yes, sir; all I can allow you."

NEW LODGER: "Well, I'll take two more rooms. I've got to wash my face in the morning."

* * * * *

PARALLEL CASES.

SCENE: A smoking compartment in a railway carriage.

OLD GENT. (to soldier on furlough): "Young man, allow me to inform you that out of every ten cases of men suffering from paralysis of the tongue, nine are due to smoking."

PRIVATE: "Sir, allow me to inform you that out of every ten men suffering from broken noses, nine are due to th' habit o' not minding their own business."

QUITE A REVELATION.

A boy took a position in an office where two different telephones were installed. "Your wife would like to speak to you on the 'phone, sir," he said to his employer.

"Which one?" inquired the employer, starting up from his desk.

"Please, sir, she didn't say, and I didn't know that you had more than one."

* * * * *

A NEIGHBOURLY ACT.

Mrs. Upstart, who had married considerably above her station, was conducting an old friend whom she had known in her less palmy days over the conservatories.

"This plant belongs to the begonia family," she observed, anxious to air her new-found knowledge.

"Ah! And you're taking care of it while they're away. Very kind of you, I'm sure, my dear," was the unexpected rejoinder.

The Mystery of the Cormoran

A Further Episode in the Career of Peregrine Parr, Lieutenant, R.N.

By Henry Macdonald.

I.

"Hello!" growled Lieutenant and Commander Peregrine Parr from behind the evening paper, "I see those Somali niggers are on the job again."

"What's been happening?" asked the Engineer Lieutenant from the depths of an easy chair drawn up in front of the stove in the destroyer's snug little wardroom.

"Same old racket," returned the first speaker. "They raided a place somewhere near Berbera, and laid out half-a-dozen men of an Indian regiment."

"Why on earth the Government don't send a punitive expedition and wipe up the blighters once and for all, I'm shot if I know," put in Travers, the First Lieutenant.

"It beats me," remarked the Engineer Lieutenant, "where they get all their rifles and ammunition."

"They've got the money to pay for 'em," said the Skipper. "There's a lot of gun-running going on on the sly. Our chaps out there are doing their level best to stop it, but the niggers are far too wily to get bowled out."

"Well," announced the Skipper at length, getting up from his chair and turning his back on the stove, "I'm going to turn in. We've got an early start to-morrow."

"I think I'll follow your example," said the Engineer Lieutenant with a yawn.

"Righto! We'll have to steam fifteen knots by 6.30," continued Parr, "and look out, Travers, that everything's ready for shoving off by then."

"Aye aye, sir."

Parr swallowed the remains of his drink, left the stove reluctantly, and moved towards the door. "Good-night, everyone," he said as he disappeared.

"Good-night," they all replied.

"The Skipper's got the hump," whispered Hargreaves, the sub-lieutenant, to Travers when Parr was out of earshot. "He's got a face like a sea-boot. D'you know what's up?"

Travers grinned. "He's in love, cocky," he answered. "He's got a long-haired pal in tow. Haven't you seen the new photo in his cabin?"

II.

Parr, wedged in one corner of the bucketing bridge, felt supremely miserable. He had every reason to be, for a howling north-easter was lashing the water into a chaotic turmoil in which the short, steep seas rose and fell in confused masses with no forward motion. Things were distinctly uncomfortable, for solid lumps of green water broke on board as the *Dragonfly* lurched and staggered on her nor'-nor'-westerly course up the east coast of England.

"Well, sub," Parr remarked at length to Hargreaves, watching the wildly gyrating compass card, "how do you like this?"

"Not much, sir," replied the young officer.

"I'm not feeling ill exactly," he added hastily, "but the smell of the oil fuel's rather beastly."

Parr laughed, for he had heard the same excuse before.

"Never mind," he said consolingly. "You'll soon get over it. I'm not feeling happy myself. Who would with his boots full of water and—— Hullo! What's the matter now?" He broke off suddenly as a violent lurch brought someone cannoning into him, and all but sent him flying. "Can't you see where you're going?"

"Beg pardon, sir," came an apologetic voice. "It's me, sir, Symes, the signalman. I was in th' chart'ouse, an' th' telegraphist told me as 'ow 'e'd 'eard distress signals!"

Parr did not wait for any more, but, scrambling down the bridge ladder, made his way to the charthouse under the bridge. Entering it he hammered on a little trap-door on the after bulkhead, and a second later it flew open to disclose a large red face, with a pair of telephone receivers strapped over the ears, framed in the opening.

"What's this about distress signals, Sparks?" Parr demanded.

"I'm getting 'em quite strong, sir!" the man replied with obvious excitement. "I can hear it now, and whoever's making it is not very far away. Have a try yourself, sir."

The lieutenant stood on the cushioned locker, and, removing his dripping headgear, put his head through the opening while the telegraphist placed the telephone receivers over his ears.

Listening intently, Parr heard a sound of frenzied scratching in the receivers. . . . —— —— . . . . . it went. Then came a short pause, followed once more by . . . —— —— —— . . . Then there was silence.

"It's S.O.S. all right," the officer remarked. "But the fellow's stopped now. How far off would you think he was?"

"Not more'n twenty or twenty-five miles, sir."

Parr nodded. "Well, answer him and ask for his exact position."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Sparks sat down on a stool, clasped the receivers over his head, manipulated an ebonite wheel, and then pressed his sending key.

The signal was soon completed, and, releasing the sending key, the operator turned a switch, and listened intently for an answer.

When Parr had almost given it up as hopeless, Sparks pulled a signal pad towards him and started writing furiously with a pencil. Presently he stopped and looked up.

"D'you mind handing me the International Signal Book, sir?" he asked. "I can't make head or tail o' what he's made. I expect he's a foreigner."

The lieutenant took the book from its rack in the charthouse and handed it in, and two minutes later the message, written in plain everyday English, danced before his tired eyes.

"*My position*," *it ran*, "*is latitude* 54° 45′ N., *longitude* 0° 10′ E., *help urgently required*."

Seizing his parallel rulers and a pencil, Parr plotted the position on the chart, while Sparks watched him through the opening.

"Is it all right, sir?" he inquired anxiously.

"Yes!" exclaimed the lieutenant, measuring the distance with a pair of compasses. "It's exactly 23 miles South 87 East of where we are now. Tell him," he added hurriedly, and cramming his sou'wester on his head, "tell him that we're coming to his assistance as fast as we can, and that he'd better fire rockets every half-hour until we get up to him."

The lieutenant dashed from the charthouse and climbed on to the bridge again.

"Hard a port!" was his first order to the helmsman. "Steer South 87 East, Hargreaves," he continued, addressing the sub-lieutenant.

"What's happened, sir?" asked the sub, when the *Dragonfly* had been steadied on her new course.

"There's a fellow in distress about twenty-three miles off," the skipper answered. "Send a message down to the engine-room and warn 'em we'll be going on at fifteen knots in a few minutes."

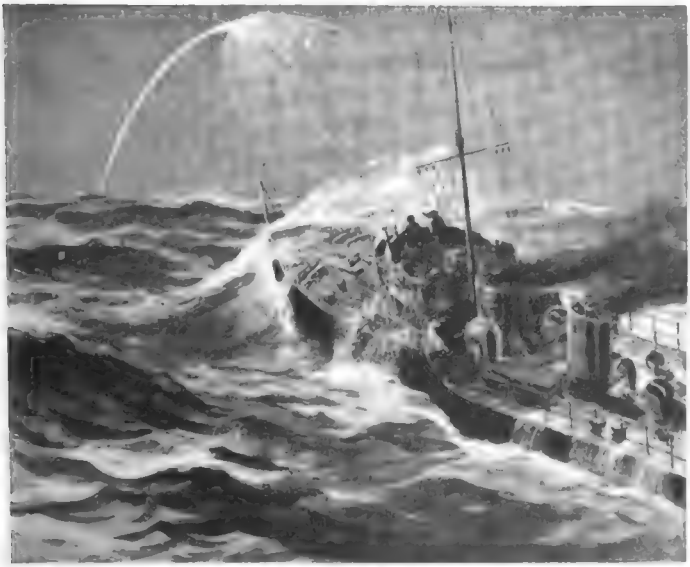
III.

For fully half-an-hour the *Dragonfly* steamed seawards on her errand of mercy.

"I wonder where on earth the fellow is?" Parr growled, scanning the horizon anxiously.

"Hullo, though, there she goes!" he added an instant later, as the fiery trail of a rocket crept into the sky a good distance off on the port bow. They watched it until it curved downwards and burst in a shower of stars, and then the lieutenant ordered the helmsman to steer straight for the spot.

The signal was answered by another rocket from the *Dragonfly*; three-quarters



The fiery trail of a rocket crept into the sky a good distance off on the port bow. They watched it until it curved downwards and burst in a shower of stars.

of an hour later Parr knew they must be getting close to the stranger, and accordingly gave orders for a searchlight to be got ready and a boat prepared for lowering.

At that moment Travers came on the bridge.

"What's been happening, sir?" were his first words. "Hargreaves tells me there's a ship in distress somewhere."

Parr explained, and pointed at the two red lights of a ship not under control, now momentarily becoming plainer.

"There, that's her," he said. "Is the boat all ready?"

"Yes, sir. She's turned out and the men are standing by."

"All right. I'll go close up and hail 'em, and if it's necessary we'll send a boat across. I'll go in her myself," he added, with a glance at the sea. "You'll have to look out for the ship."

Nearer and nearer drew the lights, and when they were barely 500 yards distant, Parr slowed the engines and ordered the searchlight to be switched on. The powerful blue-white ray flickered out and rested full on the stranger, and it could then be seen that she was a red-funnelled, black-painted steam tramp of about 1,500 tons. She lay broadside on to the wind and rolled horribly in the trough of the sea, while every now and then heavy masses of spray broke on board and went flying across her decks. Every one of the boats at her davits had vanished, while the splintered condition of her bridge showed how terribly she had suffered in the gale.

The two red "not under control lights" swayed violently in the fore rigging, while clustered on the lee side of the superstructure, taking what shelter they could from the wind and sea, was a miserable little group of human beings. They gesticulated and shouted when the light fell on them, but at first their cries were inaudible in the howling wind. Parr approached from the lee side, and turning the *Dragonfly* round until she was head to sea, closed the

tramp as near as he dared and stopped his engines.

"What ship is that?" he bellowed through a megaphone.

Someone standing a little apart from the group answered his shout. "The *Cormoran*," came a voice in broken English. "Propeller . . ." but the rest of the sentence was inaudible in the wash of the sea and whistling of the gale.

"What did he say?" asked Parr, turning to Travers.

"Didn't hear," that officer replied. "Something about his propeller. I expect he's dropped it."

"Well, it's no use our trying to shout at 'em," muttered the skipper. "Hard a port. Slow ahead port. Slow astern starboard!"

The engine-room telegraphs tinkled; the destroyer turned on her heel and then, when her bows were clear of the tramp, moved slowly ahead.

"Travers," Parr observed, "I'm going on board her. I'm going up to wind'ard and then I want you to keep the ship's head to sea while we lower the boat. When we've got away, steam round to leeward again and be ready to pick us up when we return. Understand?"

"Perfectly, sir. How'd it be to use some oil to stop the seas breaking?"

"Good idea," returned the other. "You might see about it."

Five minutes later everything was ready and the men were taking their places in the boat. Travers, on the bridge, was keeping the destroyer head on to the sea by means of the propellers, but though the motion was thereby lessened, it was still sufficiently violent to cause Parr no small anxiety, while great masses of water went hurtling by, level with the destroyer's deck.

The blocks creaked as the whaler descended; at one instant, like the plummet on the end of a string, she would be swung out far over the waves, while the next, she would fall back into her davits with a crash. But lower and lower she went, while the oscillations became more and more violent.

"'Vast lowering!" Parr shouted as she swung level with the deck, and, watching his opportunity, jumped for the boat as she was borne in towards him. He fell with a crash, and a second later felt her swinging out. Then, as the destroyer heeled away, the whaler commenced a dizzy backward dive.

"Let go!" yelled the skipper, for he knew full well that if they crashed into the destroyer's side the boat would be smashed into matchwood and her crew flung into the water.

A giant sea raised its threatening crest close ahead, but the man on the releasing line seized his opportunity and let it go in the nick of time. The whaler fell on to the back of the great comber with a violent shock; her bows dropped downwards in a smother of water, and in an instant she was full to the thwarts. There was infinite danger of their being rolled under and swamped by the destroyer, but the half-drowned bluejackets did their duty like men, and, getting the oars to bear, pulled clear somehow, how, exactly, Parr never quite realised.

Away from the *Dragonfly* things became easier. The sea was still very big, but thanks to Hargreaves, who was busy dribbling oil from the bridge, the waves no longer broke, and Parr was able to turn the boat round and head her for the tramp, now about a couple of hundred yards dead to leeward.

They approached rapidly, while the destroyer steamed round keeping her searchlight levelled on the disabled ship. The men on board the latter, seeing the whaler coming, raised a feeble cheer, but a couple of them, more practically minded than the rest, produced a Jacob's ladder and hung it over her wall side.

Once under the steamer's lee the motion became less violent, and, manœuvring the boat with the oars, Parr piloted her alongside. A coil of rope fell from above with a thud; the bowman promptly snatched it and made the end fast, and as his craft swung in, the lieutenant made a spring at the rope-ladder. He caught it, and clambering up reached the deck in safety where he was helped on board by a dozen willing hands, wet through and through, but irrepressibly cheerful at his success.

"Well," he remarked, just as if he had arrived on board to pay a formal call, "what can I do for you?"

"*Mein Gott!*" gasped a large dark-bearded individual who, from the gold lace on his cap, was evidently the captain. 'How you com' in der small boat in dis sea?"

He seized Parr's hand and wrung it violently.

"Never mind that now, cap'ten," answered the Englishman. "What's the matter with your ship?"

"Der propeller 'as gone. 'E vas racin' in der sea, an' 'e drop off, pouf, jus' like dat. 'Ze engines is broke, an' der sheep iss

The powerful blue-white ray flickered out and rested full on the stranger. . . . Clustered on the lee side of the superstructure, taking what shelter they could from the wind and sea, was a miserable little group of human beings. (Page 137, col. 2.

leagin', but 'der pomp he keep der 'vater 'onder!"

"Pretty bad," Parr said pleasantly. "I suppose you want a tow?"

"*Ja.* a tow," answered the foreigner. "Vill you please to tell your captain?"

"I am the captain," returned the other. "I'll see if we can tow you into Hartlepool; that's the nearest port. Have you a decent sized wire we can use?"

"*Ja*," answered the foreigner dubiously. "We haf' goot wire, but your leetle sheep, can 'e do 'et, you 'tink?"

"We'll have a shot at it, anyhow," Parr replied rather testily. The necessary arrangements were soon made, and, while the naval officer descended the rope-ladder and went back to his ship, the *Cormoran's* men busied themselves in unreeling a thick wire hawser.

When the captain of the tramp had hailed to say that everything was ready, the destroyer steamed slowly ahead paying out a grass hawser to the end of which was attached an ordinary lifebuoy. Passing to windward of the disabled ship, Parr manœuvred his vessel so that the floating hawser should drift across the *Cormoran's* bows. The searchlight was kept on the buoy bobbing in the troubled sea, and presently, when it was close alongside, Parr saw to his satisfaction that those on board had succeeded in hooking the line with a grapnel and were hauling it in.

The next manœuvre was to get the wire across from ship to ship. Its end was made fast to the grass hawser on board the tramp, and, while Parr kept his ship as close as he dared, every available man in the little man-o'-war tailed on to the rope to haul the towing-wire across. It was ticklish work, for the ship rolled and pitched violently, while there was every prospect of the hawser wrapping itself round the propellers, but at length, after what seemed an eternity, the end appeared and was made fast.

The two ships were now connected, and, when the tramp hailed to say their end was secured, Parr put his engines to "slow ahead." The wire tautened out as the strain came upon it, and for one brief instant the skipper thought that it would part, and that he would have to repeat the process. But he had calculated his speed to a nicety, and, plunging and wallowing, the disabled *Cormoran* moved slowly off behind her small salvor.

After a terrible passage lasting eight interminable hours, the destroyer, with her lumbering prize still behind her, crept into Hartlepool harbour. Parr himself always said that it was the most trying time he had ever experienced in the whole of his naval career, for at one moment the towing-wire would be as taut as a harpstring, while the next it was sagging in bights in the water. But he did it all the same, and at last, when the *Cormoran* had been safely berthed beside a wharf in the sheltered waters of the harbour and the destroyer had been secured alongside her, he fell down the bridge ladder and made straight for his cabin.

IV.

It was quite late before Parr awoke, and, when he did come to his senses, it was to find that Travers, the First Lieutenant, was shaking him violently by the shoulder.

"One of the *Cormoran's* men wants to speak to you, sir."

Parr snorted angrily.

"I can't be disturbed at odd hours because some chap wants to speak to me. I'm not here to suit his convenience. I've never heard of such infernal——"

"No, sir," interrupted Travers. "But I wouldn't have wakened you if I hadn't known he'd got something important to say. He's an Englishman."

"Well, bring the blighter down here," grumbled Parr, switching on the electric light and putting one leg over the edge of the bunk. "He's a nuisance all the same."

Travers left the cabin, and, scrambling out of his bunk, Parr began to put on some clothes. Five minutes later he heard steps descending the ladder outside, and then there came a knock at the door.

"Come in."

Travers entered, followed by a small, dark, weedy-looking little man clad in the stained dungaree clothing and sea-boots of a merchant seaman. The newcomer was obviously ill at ease, for, removing his disreputable cap, he stood by the door, fingering it furtively and glancing nervously at Parr.

"Good evening," said the latter pleasantly. "What can I do for you?"

"I've got somethin' I wants to tell 'yer, sir," answered the man, "somethin' important. We won't be 'eard 'ere, sir?" he queried anxiously, looking over his shoulder towards the door.

"I'll just make certain," Parr reassured him. "Travers, you might tell the quartermaster not to allow anyone not belonging to this ship to come below. If the Captain of the *Cormoran* asks for me, I'm busy. Come back here yourself when you've told him," he

added in a whisper. "I want a witness. Understand?"

Travers nodded and left the cabin, but came back a few moments later having delivered the message.

"Now," said Parr to the stranger, "let's hear what you have to say. First of all, what's your name?"

"Ebenezer Smith, sir."

"Right. Let's have your yarn."

"Well, it's like this 'ere, sir. I 'appen ter know that the *Cormoran's* got a cargo o' rifles an' ammunition aboard. She's takin' 'em to some place in Somaliland, I 'eard it was, but I cawn't remember its name."

"What?" exclaimed Parr in amazement. "D'you mean she's a gun-runner?"

Smith nodded mysteriously.

"How d'you know she's got those rifles on board?" asked the naval officer.

"I seen the cases bein' loaded aboard, sir, an' I know'd from the markin' on 'em, an' th' weight."

"Why have you volunteered this information?" queried Parr suspiciously.

"Because I'm Henglish, sir."

"H'm! Are you sure that's your only reason?"

Smith looked very sheepish, and did not reply immediately.

"I want ter get square with Capten Borsen, sir," he explained. "'E's a . . . devil, 'e is, sir, and th' dawg's life 'e——"

"Ah, I quite understand," put in Parr, smiling inwardly. "Captain Borsen is the master of the *Cormoran*, I presume?"

Smith assented.

"Well, I propose having a few words with Captain Borsen."

"But 'e'll know I've given him away, sir," wailed Smith. "'E'll kill me, s'welp me,' e will!"

"Oh no he won't. You can stay on board here, and I daresay I can see about getting you a job in England."

He turned to the First Lieutenant.

"You might hand Smith over to the wardroom steward, and tell him to look after him, and give him something to eat. I will go and have a yarn with our esteemed friend, Captain Borsen."

V.

A little less than an hour later Parr was sitting in Captain Borsen's cabin on board the *Cormoran*. The foreigner had been loud in his protestations of gratitude to the Englishman for having salved his ship, but the latter, to tell the truth, was getting bored with the adulatory flattery of his host. He could see from the way Captain Borsen behaved that he was obviously ill at ease.

"I understand, Captain," he remarked affably, "that you are on a voyage to the East?"

Borsen looked at him uneasily.

"Dat iss so," he agreed with a nod.

"Whereabouts are you going?" queried the Englishman.

"To Colombo, der Straits Settlements, an' den to Japan."

"Ah, I see. But supposing I told you," said Parr without any previous warning, "that you have guns and ammunition on board which you propose to land in Somaliland. What then?" He looked intently at the foreigner to see how he would take this bombshell.

Borsen's jaw dropped, and he got very red in the face.

"Rifles!" he stuttered. "I haf no rifles on board!"

"I said guns," Parr replied, "but, by your mentioning rifles, it appears to me as if you'd given yourself away."

"If I haf' rifles on board, you cannot take 'dem," shouted Borsen. "My Government——"

"You needn't shout, captain," Parr interrupted, with a smile. "Your Government is probably not aware that you have a cargo of weapons on board which are to be used against the British. The rifles were not, in fact, shipped in one of the ports of your own country!"

The foreigner's face worked with fury. "Bah!" he bellowed, rising from his chair and advancing threateningly towards the Englishman. "I 'vill see you do not tell. I 'vill——"

Parr did not move, but an instant later the infuriated captain stopped dead, for the lieutenant's hand dived into his pocket and reappeared with a minute Browning automatic pistol in its grasp.

"I had an idea," he drawled, "that you'd try some game or another, so I just brought this. Looks nice, doesn't it? They tell me I'm rather a good shot, too. Sit down in your chair, you fool!" he went on, raising the muzzle of his weapon as Borsen made another step towards him. "Sit down, unless you want me to let drive!"

The exasperated foreigner collapsed in his seat. "Ach, you Engleeshman!" he cried angrily. "You com' on board my sheep an' try to keel me! My Government will obtain sateesfaction!"

"Perhaps they will," Parr retorted, rising from his chair, "but perhaps they won't. At any rate, I've found out what I want to. But you're quite wrong when you say I've been trying to kill you. See for yourself." He flicked back the sliding lock of his little weapon as he spoke and displayed its empty interior. "The pistol, you will be pleased to observe, is unloaded. I wish you a very good evening!"

Borsen looked at him speechless with rage, while Parr, with a pleasant smile, left the cabin.

Parr informed the Admiralty of his discovery, and representations were made to the Government of the State whose flag the *Cormoran* flew. With its acquiescence the entire cargo was confiscated.

Some time later Parr and the other officers and men of the *Dragonfly* received a substantial award in salvage money from the owners of the steamer, but a couple of months afterwards, when the affair had very nearly been forgotten, the skipper experienced another surprise, for going into his cabin one day after the mail had been sorted, he saw a small registered package bearing a foreign stamp lying on his table.

He tore it open to find inside it a handsome gold watch with an inscription on the back:

"To Lieutenant Peregrine Parr of H.M.S. *Dragonfly* for having saved the lives of the officers and crew of the steamer *Cormoran*. From the Emperor."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he gasped in astonishment.

When he had recovered from his surprise his first care was to write a long letter to the one person in the world he loved better than himself.

It bore a Southsea address.

Twenty-four hours later he received a reply in the shape of a telegram. It was signed "Joan," and said merely: "Well done, Perry."

Parr read it with a happy smile, for to him it meant far more than all the gold watches in the world.

COLD STEEL.

He was just a blue-eyed stripling, only twenty-one or two,
And he never dreamt that he would have to fight,
But he heard his country calling and he answered to the call,
And was shipped for foreign service in the night.

And he never funked a moment of the sultry, age-long days
When he marched with blistered, unaccustomed feet,
Never grumbled at the rain which fell and chilled him to the bone,
Or the scarcity of decent food to eat.

But there came an awful moment when the order came to charge,
And the bullets fell about his head like rain,
When he turned and staggered blindly in a panic to retreat,
Till the cry of "Coward!" struck dimly on his brain.

Then he paused, and plunged triumphant in the thickest of the fight,
Never heeding what his recklessness might bring,
And the God of countless heroes added yet another name
To the list of those who died to serve their King.

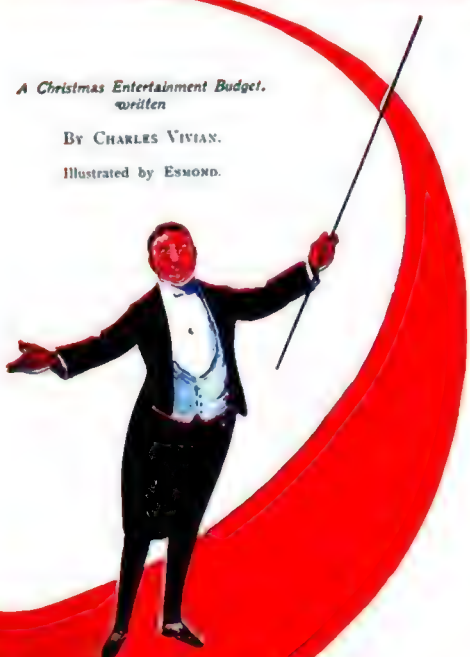
Dorothy Rose.

How to Make Things Go

A Christmas Entertainment Budget, written

By Charles Vivian.

Illustrated by Esmond.



INDOOR

Christmas is the one season of the year when everybody meets on the common ground of fun and hilarity—

BULL IN THE RING.

This is a capital game for the right time and the right people. Of rules there are practically none and the whole fun consists of a good old-fashioned romp.

A ring is formed by the players joining hands.

In the middle of the ring stands the "bull" with his hands securely fastened behind him.

When all is in readiness the word is given and the "bull" endeavours to force his way out of the ring.

Directly he has done this, the ring is broken and all the players give chase to the "bull." The player who catches the "bull" takes his place in the ring and the game continues.

It is a good plan to throw the whole house open to the fugitive "bull." I remember on one occasion an excited "bull" took sanctuary beneath the bed of a venerable bishop. All would have been well if it had not chanced that the prelate, on that particular night, had retired early!

WINGING THE PIGEON.

In this game the players, all but one, sit in a row at the end of the room, while at the other end there is a corresponding number of empty chairs.

The player who is "out" walks up and down behind the others with a small ball in his hand. This ball he drops into the hands of one of the players, who must all hold their hands in their laps ready to receive it.

Directly the ball is dropped into someone's hand all the players but the one who holds the ball, scatter and try to reach the chairs opposite, and the player with the ball, without leaving his seat, tries to hit one of them by throwing the ball.

If he succeeds, he is given a badge or favour which entitles him to a small prize at the conclusion of the game; if he fails he is "out," and drops the ball in his turn.

It is not necessary to clear the room; indeed, if there is some heavy furniture scattered in the form of "obstacles" between the two rows of chairs the fun is all the greater.

CENTRE BASE.

Another good romp in which a ball figures is "Centre Base."

The players stand in a large circle about two feet apart. In the centre stands a player with a ball;

ROMPS

old men of sixteen and youngsters of sixty can all kick over the traces and enjoy some boisterous tear-about romps

on the floor beside him there is chalked a small ring, or, if it is preferred, a piece of paper may be fixed to the floor with drawing-pins.

The player in the centre tosses the ball to one of the others, who must catch it, place it in the ring—or on the paper—and chase the thrower, whose object is to regain the ball without being caught.

If he manages to do this he is again thrower; if he is caught he takes the place of his captor, who now becomes thrower.

The chase is, of course, in and out among the other players, who usually help the fugitive or the pursuer as the whim seizes them.

COME OVER HERE!

For this game chairs are placed in a large circle. Behind each chair stands a man, and upon every chair, *except one*, sits a girl.

The man behind the empty chair looks round the circle at the girls and beckons to one of them to come to his chair. The man behind her tries to stop her by holding her arms. If she manages to escape his retentive embrace and gain the empty chair, the chair on which she was sitting becomes empty, and the man behind it beckons to the lady of his choice, and so on.

If the girl is unable to reach the empty chair the man behind it has to beckon to someone else.

The game should be played briskly, and always affords any amount of fun.

Of course, the men can be seated, with the girls standing behind them if this is preferred.

HUNT THE RING

A ring or small key is threaded on a long piece of string, the ends of which are then joined.

The players stand or sit in a circle, holding the string in their hands.

One player stands in the middle of the circle and endeavours to discover in whose possession the ring is.

The player's hands are kept moving and the ring is passed from one to another.

The best clue to the holder of the ring is his or her guilty expression.

When the odd player discovers the ring he changes places with the player in whose possession the ring was found, and the game proceeds.

DRAWING-ROOM GAMES

These are the games which are useful for the long winter evenings. None of them is of a very strenuous nature, so there need be no fear that after-dinner digestion will be upset, or the existence of valuable *bric-a-brac* imperilled.

POTATO QUOITS.

Two circles are chalked on the carpet, about twelve inches in diameter, and four yards apart; or, if it is preferred, two pieces of paper about twelve inches square may be fastened to the floor with drawing pins.

The players are divided into two rival teams. Suppose that there are twenty-four players, then six of each team—twelve players altogether—take their places, say, north of the two circles or papers.

There must be twelve potatoes of a uniform size, six belonging to each team. A narrow band of peel should be removed from one lot of six, so that the potatoes, and the sides can be distinguished by the terms "Ring" and "Plain."

The object, of course, is to pitch the potatoes into the circles or on to the paper as the case may be.

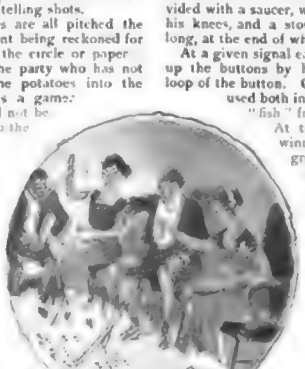
First a "Ring" plays, then a "Plain." The members of the non-playing party field the wandering potatoes, and offer copious advice to their partisans regarding the most telling shots.

When the twelve potatoes are all pitched the score is counted up—one point being reckoned for every potato in or touching the circle or paper and the game proceeds by the party who has not yet played pitching back the potatoes into the other circle. Fifty points is a game.

Overhand throwing should not be allowed, as it is dangerous to the fielders.

HARPOONING APPLES.

A [illegible] tub nearly full of water is placed on a table with twenty or thirty [illegible] floating in it. Each player is armed with a metal skewer tied to a long string, and the object is to see who can harpoon the most apples. The skewers must be thrown with one hand while the string is held in the other.



STRIKE THE CORK.

A game that will be found very amusing can be played with the aid of a cork and an ordinary table knife. The knife must be stuck in the crack of the door, and the cork is placed upright on the handle.

The players start as far away as the size of the room allows, and, covering the left eye with the left hand and stretching out the right arm with the first finger extended, march up to the cork and try to knock it off.

This is not so easy as it sounds, for, owing to the difficulty of judging distance with one eye, they nearly always strike at the cork before they are within a foot of it. Only one sweep at the cork is allowed at a time; anyone who wants a second try must go back and toe the line again.

FISHING.

The players sit in a small circle. The circle is strewn with boot-buttons, and each player is provided with a saucer, which must be balanced upon his knees, and a stout black thread about 3 feet long, at the end of which is a bent pin.

At a given signal each player endeavours to pick up the buttons by hooking the pin through the loop of the button. Only the right hand must be used both in angling and in detaching the "fish" from the hook.

At the end of two minutes the winner is he who has the greatest number of "fish" in his saucer.

THE ELUSIVE RICE.

The players sit round a table on which, in the middle, is a heap of rice, uncooked, of course!

Each player is provided with a saucer and a hairpin. The object is to collect in five minutes as many grains of rice as possible and convey them to the saucer by means of the hairpin.

DODGING THE BOTTLES.

In this game the players are divided into pairs, each pair consisting of a man and a girl. Each girl is blindfolded, and reins made of long pieces of ribbon are attached to her arms.

On the floor are placed a dozen empty bottles, marking the "course" the players are to follow. The furniture need not be moved; in fact, if the "course" winds in and out among chairs and tables, all the better.

Using the ribbons as reins, the men have to guide their steeds round the "course." After each trial, the number of bottles upset is counted, the couple who knock over the fewest being declared the winners.

BLOWING OUT THE CANDLE.

A lighted candle is placed upon the floor, and a victim having been selected, he is asked to measure a certain number of paces from it. He must then be blindfolded, and instructed to re-measure his paces so that he can stoop down and blow out the candle.

Directly he starts the candle is removed, and blow as he will the onlookers announce his failure. Even if the candle is left in its place, the difficulty of judging direction makes the feat anything but an easy one.

THE SCULPTOR.

In this game one player is blindfold and provided with two teaspoons. The others sit in a circle, without moving or speaking, and with their feet touching the floor.

The player with the spoons advances carefully, feeling his way with his feet until he encounters the feet of one of the other players. He then explores the face of his find with the spoons, trusting to the laughter which is almost sure to follow to identify his victim. If he succeeds in guessing correctly, they change places; if not, he retires to the middle of the circle, and tries again.

SNIFF AND SAY.

It is extraordinary how easily the average person gets muddled when he or she is asked to identify several strong odours.

An amusing game which demonstrates this, and appears extremely simple until it is played, is "Sniff and Say."

A dozen small blue bottles are procured from a chemist, and each has a number attached to it. Each bottle is then half filled with some strong-smelling liquid, and the players are asked to identify the scents, and write them down on a card, numbering them according to the numbers on the bottles. The inaccuracy of the majority will be surprising.

Here are some good liquids for the purpose: Brandy, turpentine, eau-de-Cologne, paraffin, methylated spirit, water, ammonia (a weak solution), vinegar, Worcester sauce.

The most correct card is, of course, the winning one.

POSTMAN'S KNOCK.

This is one of the old favourites and always causes excitement. One player retires into the hall to personate the postman while another acts as doorkeeper, the remaining players keeping their places in the room. Upon hearing the postman's knock, the doorkeeper opens the door and announces, say, "two letters for Miss So-and-So," who must retire into the hall to receive them.

The subsequent proceedings are veiled in mystery unless the doorkeeper is so indiscreet as to leave the door ajar.

The original postman then takes his place inside the room, while the girl of his choice remains in the hall and summons a male member of the party to receive his "letter," and so the game proceeds.

FREAKS.

This is a drawing game. Each player is provided with a piece of paper about 2 inches by 6 inches, and a pencil. The pieces of paper are divided into three parts by creases.

Each player draws a head on the top portion of his paper, and doubles it back out of sight. The papers are then mixed and, re-distributed, when the players draw bodies on to the heads and, finally after a further collection and distribution, legs.

Some exceedingly funny results are obtained. The illustrations are of some "freaks" actually perpetrated in a game of this sort.

No artistic skill is required in this game, as the more crude the drawings are the more merriment they are likely to cause. The finished sketches may be pinned upon the wall as a spur to fresh efforts.

THE DETECTIVE GAME.

On a table in an empty room are placed a couple of dozen different articles. At a given signal, when all the players are ready, they are allowed to enter the room, and for one minute they concentrate their attention, in silence, on the table and its contents.

They then leave the room and write down on slips of paper provided for the purpose, the names of as many of the articles on the table as they can remember. The winning card is that which contains the greatest number of correct names.

Of course, the players should thoroughly understand what it is they have to do before the game commences, and helping one another should be strictly forbidden.

EGG HOCKEY.

Each player must be provided with a fan, and the "field" being cleared of furniture, the players are divided into two teams. In the centre of the "field" is placed a blown egg, and it is the object of each team to waft the egg over their opponents' back line.

Any player who touches the egg, either with his fan or his person, is disqualified, and must retire from the game. In this way the players are weeded out, so that the game often ends in a Titanic struggle between the sole remaining representative of each team.

If the egg is blown over the side lines, it should be brought into the "field" in a line where it went out, and both teams resume wafting at a given signal.

FISHING FOR CORKS.

A shallow bowl or bath half filled with water is needed for this game. In it are floating a number of corks, into each of which has been fastened one of the tiny staples—shaped like a croquet hoop—which ironmongers sell. Each player has a fishing-rod, and the object is to see who can secure the greatest number of cork "fish." The fishing-rods can be made of bamboo canes, string, and bent pins.

Catches and Puzzles

KING GEORGE'S FINGERS.

The performer holds out his left hand with the first two fingers extended.

"Do you know," he says earnestly, slowly wriggling his fingers about, "that King George can't move these two fingers?"

There is a murmur of sympathy and perhaps incredulity. Then someone asks why he cannot.

"Because these two fingers are *mine!*"

SPELLERS CAUGHT.

In nearly every party there can be found one person at least who prides himself or herself on being able to spell correctly. This good person is the preordained victim for this catch.

Tell him that you will give him a sentence which it will be absolutely impossible for him to spell correctly. He will laugh at you, and may even back his opinions with a small wager. Freeze on to this instantly; money is always useful at Christmas.

The sentence he has to write down is this:

"You cannot pare a pear properly with a pair of shears. There are three *pairs* in that sentence."

The word *pairs* it is impossible to spell, as "pairs," "pares," and "pears" are all incorrect. In fact, the sentence cannot be spelt correctly!

SOME MINOR ONES.

Write down in figures twelve thousand, twelve hundred and twelve. It takes some time before the correct result is forthcoming. 13,212.

Write down a small "i" with a dot above it. In nine cases out of ten the experimenter will simply write down an ordinary "i"; with a dot above it it should, of course, be "i."

When is man's laughter criminal?
When it's all one word—manslaughter.

"Have you heard about the Dean who was found dead in a box?"

"Good gracious, no!"

"Never heard of a sardine? Where have you been living?"

"Heard the tale of the empty suit case?"

"No. What is it?"

"Oh, there was nothing in it!"

"You have read about the tragedy of the three wells, I suppose?"

"Indeed, I haven't. Tell me."

"Well, well, well!"

THE NINE SQUARES.

Here are nine squares each with a number marked upon it.

The figures total six, up and down and across diagonally one way. The problem is to arrange the squares so that they total six in all directions, but the three with a ring round it must not be moved.

1	2	3
2	(3)	1
3	1	2

The solution is to move the bottom line bodily to the top.

3	1	2
1	2	3
2	(3)	1

The following verse read without punctuation is somewhat amazing:

I saw a peacock; with a fiery tale
I saw a blazing comet; pour down hail
I saw a cloud; enwrapped with ivy round
I saw an oak tree; swallow up a whale
I saw the boundless sea; brimful of ale
I saw a Venice glass; fifteen feet deep
I saw a well; full of men's tears that weep
I saw wet eyes; among the things I saw
Were no sore eyes nor any other eyesore

The following rhyme is usually rather a puzzler:

"An English word is known to me,
Seven letters it contains
From which when you have taken two
Exactly eight remains."

The word is "Freight."

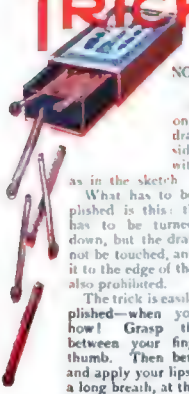
What word of six letters, by transposing its two middle letters, expresses the direct opposite:

"United," which becomes "untied."

What word is there the first two letters of which signify a man, the first three a woman, the first four a great man, and the whole a great woman?

"Heroine."

TRICKS WITH MATCHES



NOT A BREATHLESS ADVENTURE.

In this trick the box only is used. The drawer is placed upside down on the table with the case on top as in the sketch.

What has to be accomplished is this: the whole has to be turned upside down, but the drawer must not be touched, and sliding it to the edge of the table is also prohibited.

The trick is easily accomplished—when you know how! Grasp the case between your finger and thumb. Then bend down and apply your lips to it. Now draw a long breath, at the same time raising the head.

Not a Breathless Adventure.

When the box is in the required position, it can, of course, be lowered carefully to the table.

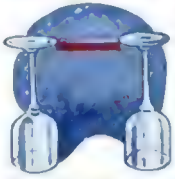
PERFORMING THE IMPOSSIBLE.

Two wine-glasses and two matches are the properties required for this trick.

Turn the wine-glasses upside down and between them balance one of the matches as shown in the sketch.

The problem is to move away one wine-glass and leave the match in the same position. The other match is the only "outside help" which is allowed.

Light the spare match and with it light the head of the balanced match. Then blow them both out, move away the wine-glass from the end of the horizontal match, and the latter will remain in its position, adhering to the other wine-glass with its exploded head.



Performing the Impossible

WHAT MATCHES ARE MADE OF.

Fourteen matches are placed as in the first sketch. Any member of the audience is asked to remove two and alter the position of three others and thus show what matches are made of.

When they have all failed you can show them by making the fateful word shown in the sketch.

What Matches are Made Of.

A MATCH GAME.

This game is unique in that the player who is "in the know" invariably wins.

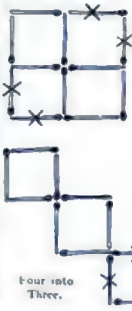
Twenty matches are placed between the players. Each player has, in turn, to take one, two, or three matches as he pleases. The winner is he who leaves exactly one match for his opponent to take.

This is the secret of success. The foreordained winner plays first, and leaves his opponent with seventeen matches. He then takes one, two, or three, so as to leave his opponent in turn, with 13, 9, 5, and 1; or in other words he takes three to begin with, and after that he contrives that they take four matches between them until the game is over.

FOUR INTO THREE.

Twelve matches are placed as in the first sketch making four complete squares. What the ingenious player is asked to do is to move (not remove, remember) four of these matches and leave three complete squares of the same size as those on the table.

The way to accomplish the seemingly impossible feat is shown in the sketches. The crossed matches are those moved.



Four into Three.

THE MYSTERIOUS SQUARE.

Four matches are placed at right angles to one another. The problem is to move one match only in such a way that the four matches shall form a perfect square.

The solution is quite simple. The lower match is pulled down a trifle so that the *ends* of the matches form the square. The diagram makes this quite plain.

The Mysterious Square

A SAFE BET.

A match box and four matches are required for this trick. Stand the box on end, and stick two matches upright, and another horizontally, as in sketch.

Apply a lighted match to the horizontal one, and get your victim to bet upon which end he thinks will catch fire first. He must lose, for the match flies away and goes out.

A Safe Bet.

WHAT A PROBLEM!

In what circumstances would the following speech be perfectly intelligible and reasonable?

"For want of water we drank water, but if we had had water we should have drunk wine."

The words were spoken by the crew of a homeward bound vessel that could not cross the harbour bar for lack of water, and who had no wine aboard.

THE PERILS OF PUNCTUATION.

Here are some little-known examples of punctuation problems.

It is and I said not but

If is is not is and is not is not is not what is it is not is and what is it is is not if is not is is?

The solutions are:

It is "and" I said, not "but."

If "is" is not "is," and "is not" is not "is not," what is it "is not" is, and what is it "is" is not, if "is not" is "is"?

QUITE SIMPLE REALLY.

Most people erroneously assert that the word which when written in capitals reads the same forwards and backwards and upside down, is like unto Mrs. Harris, of whom it was written "there ain't no sich person!"

They are, of course, quite wrong. The word is NOON.

BY THE WAY.

Why did the razorbill raise her bill?
To let the sea-urchin see her chin.

Why wouldn't the bat bat?
Because the fieldfare wouldn't field fair.

What made the fly fly?
Because the spider spied her.

Why did the owl howl?
Because the woodpecker would peck her.

What is the French for teetotaler?
Thé tout à l'heure.

WHAT'S THIS?

"Four S's, four I's, two P's, and an M;
Pray tell me what you can make of them"

is a couplet which usually floors all but the brightest spirits.

The answer is MISSISSIPPI.

SOME SENTENCE!

Those who are fond of sorting out mixed-up letters can try their hands on this little lot of seventeen:

PFFOOOORREIGLINTS.

To aid them it may be mentioned that the words which they make constitute the longest sentence in the world.

The solution is—

"Go to prison for life."

ABOUT PRONUNCIATION.

Pronounce these Scottish names:

MACLEOD.
MACCULLAGH.
MACNAGHTEN.
MACHINERY.

"McHinery! Oh, no. I've always heard that word pronounced "Masheenery."

Similarly most people will "come unstuck" if the word "Oakum" is placed at the foot of a list of Irish names like this:

O SHAUGHNESSY.
O HARA.
O CALLAGHAN.
O AKUM.

FIND THE WORDS.

Here is a problem which usually stumps even experts:

Take away one letter and I am the same.
" " two letters " " "
" " three " " " "
" " all my " " " "

The correct answer, which should only be given after ascertaining that there is an unimpeded exit, is "the Postman."

FRANKLY FRIVOLOUS!

Someone once upon a time declared that figures could not lie.

He should have been introduced to—

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and then have been requested to *turn them upside down!*

CONJURING TRICKS

All these tricks can be mastered with the minimum amount of practice, and whenever "properties" are required they are of the simplest, and can be procured without the slightest difficulty

BOTTLING THE SIXPENCE.

This trick looks very amazing, but as a matter of fact it requires no skill whatever for its performance.

On the top of an ordinary empty wine-bottle place a band of stiff paper, and on the top of the band, exactly over the mouth of the bottle, a sixpence. The sketch shows exactly what to do.

Bottling the Sixpence.

The conjuror then tells his audience that he will knock away the paper with a cane, and owing to his great mental concentration the sixpence will fall into the bottle.

This is what actually happens. Strike the inside of the hand smartly with the cane and down will fall the sixpence into the bottle.

THE FLOATING NEEDLE.

When the conjuror announces his intention of making a needle float he will probably be greeted with emphatic incredulity.

The way to perform the trick is this. On the surface of the water carefully lay a cigarette-paper so that its upper surface remains dry. Upon the cigarette-paper place the needle. In a few moments the paper will sink and the needle will remain floating on the top of the water.

It is, of course, necessary that the water should be absolutely still.

The Floating Needle.

THE MARKED PENNY.

This trick is particularly simple. The conjuror asks one of the audience for a penny, which he requests shall be marked so that the owner knows it again. He then produces six other pennies and places the seven into a hat and shakes them up together.

The Marked Penny.

He now asks the owner of the marked penny to think hard of the general appearance of that coin, and after apparently concentrating his own mind upon the matter, too, the conjuror, holding the hat above his head so that he cannot possibly see into it, puts his hand inside it and produces the marked penny.

The secret of the trick is that only the marked penny is handled, *i.e.*, only the marked penny is *warm*; the others are *cold*. The conjuror simply picks out the warm penny. There should be plenty of "patter" so that the conjuror may keep the marked penny in his hand as long as possible.

THE MYSTERIOUS HALFPENCE.

This is one of the simplest tricks, but if it is smartly performed with appropriate "patter" it always goes down remarkably well. Let me present it first of all from the audience's point of view.

The conjuror seats himself behind a table covered with a dark cloth. He places his hands palms upwards upon the table and displays a halfpenny in each palm.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," he says, "you see that in each hand I have a halfpenny. I now turn my hands

over—so." He turns them over. "And you will imagine that under each hand there is a halfpenny. And you will be right." He removes first one hand and then the other and shows the halfpence, one under each hand.

"But now," he goes on, "I am going to do that over again." He does it, keeping his hands palms down[illegible] the table. "This time I say that under one hand there will be no halfpenny"—he removes his right hand; there is nothing beneath it—"and that under the other there will be two." He removes his left hand and discloses two!

The explanation is very simple. Before the conjuror turns his hands over for the first time [illegible] coins are in the palms of his hands; before [illegible] he does so the second time the halfpenny [illegible] in his right hand is not in the palm but at the base of the first and second fingers. This hand is turned over slightly before the other and the coin flies over, unseen by the audience, to be covered immediately by the left.

A very little practice enables anyone to perform this trick quickly and accurately.

THE PENNY AND THE HOLE

In a sheet of thick paper cut a circular hole [illegible] a shilling. Lay the paper upon the [illegible] of it place a penny.

The trick consists in passing the penny through the hole in the paper without touching the penny [illegible] the paper.

At first sight this seems to be an absolute impossibility, and those of the audience who care to try their skill are certain to retire discomfited.

The way to perform the trick is this: Fold the paper Exactly! exactly across the centre of the [illegible]. With the folded paper scoop up the penny and shake it until the edge [illegible] through the hole. Now catch hold of the two ends of the paper and bend them up, and the penny will drop through the hole.

EGGSACTLY!

To balance an egg on its end on the rim of a tumbler is a feat which on the face of it seems practically impossible.

The difficulty will vanish, however, when the aid of an ordinary cork and two ordinary dinner forks [illegible] and they are made use of as shown in the [illegible]. The forks are stuck into each side of the cork [illegible] carefully held in the required position [illegible] then balanced on the top of the [illegible] and the trick is done.

THE SUGAR AND THE CUPS

Ten lumps of sugar and three tea[illegible] "properties" required for this trick.

You ask any member of your audience to put the sugar into the cups so that each cup shall contain an odd number of lumps.

After they have tried, and desisted for weariness, the trick can be done for their edification thus: Put two lumps into the first cup, three into the second, and the remaining two into the third [illegible] inside the third.

The first cup will now contain [illegible] three, and the third five; *i.e.*, the contents [illegible] cup as well as the two lumps originally placed in it.

CARD TRICKS

THE UPSIDE-DOWN CARDS.

The performer lays a row of cards face upward on the table, and applies his finger-tips to each card in turn. He explains that he is doing this to feel whether he is in sympathy with these particular cards or not. Occasionally he may throw out a card, and replace it from the pack because it is unsympathetic.

At length he explains that he is in complete sympathy with the cards, and he guarantees that he will leave the room and that when he comes back again he will be able to tell which of the cards have been turned top to bottom by the audience.

On experiment he proves that what he says is correct.

The explanation is that nearly all cards have the index pip nearer the edge at one end of the card than the other, and the performer arranges all the cards with the big space at the top or *vice versa*. He is thus enabled to tell at a glance when he re-enters the room which of the cards have been moved. Any cards which seem to have the same distance from the edge to the index pip are, of course, "unsympathetic," and must be discarded.

THE BRANDED HAND.

The performer takes the pack of cards and throws eight cards on to the table. He then takes a piece of notepaper which he divides into eight pieces. A member of the audience now, at the performer's request, calls out the name of each card. These names the performer writes on the pieces of paper which he folds up and drops into a hat.

When all the eight pieces of paper are in the hat they are thoroughly shaken up together.

The performer then asks a member of the audience to select one of the pieces, and in order that there may be no possibility of his seeing the others he throws them into the fire. He further asks his assistant to select the card, the name of which is written on the paper, and to place it face down on the table. The performer turns his back while this is being done.

He then asks his assistant to burn the paper and crush up the ashes. He then places the ashes on the back of his hand and, after rubbing them gently, blows them away. On his hand appears the letters K. H. He gazes fixedly at them for a few moments, then he says: "The card is the King of Hearts!" The card is turned up and confirms the assertion.

This telling trick is extremely simple. The performer knows that the King of Hearts is among the eight cards first thrown on the table. On *each* of the pieces of paper he writes "King of Hearts," destroying the seven not chosen by his assistant to avoid exposure. The letters K. H. which mysteriously appear on his hand are produced by previously marking them with an ordinary piece of soap, and the ashes of the paper adhere to the soapy deposit.

This is a very mystifying trick, and it is practically impossible for even the brightest onlooker to guess the secret of it.

THE DISAPPEARING ACE.

The performer takes the pack and, running through it, takes out three of the aces, which he shows fanwise in his right hand to be the ace of clubs, the ace of diamonds, and the ace of spades.

He then places the three aces on the table and takes up the pack in his left hand and the first of the three aces in his right. He lets the spectators see that this is the ace of spades, and he places it near the top of the pack and pushes it well in. He takes the next card and says: "The ace of diamonds I will place somewhere about the middle of the pack," and this he does. He then takes the last ace, showing it to be the ace of clubs, and places it near the bottom of the pack.

He now places the pack on the table, and giving it a sharp tap, commands the ace of diamonds to disappear. A member of the audience who comes up and examines the pack finds no ace of diamonds in it.

The conjurer now throws back his coat, and requests the member of the audience to take the ace of diamonds out of his waistcoat pocket!

The explanation is simple. The card which appears to be the ace of diamonds is in reality the ace of hearts and is held as shown in the sketch, and the card is thus transformed into the ace of diamonds for the time being.

The real ace of diamonds is, of course, previously placed in the magician's pocket.

TOASTS

Christmas is the time of reunion and toasts. Much *kudos* belongs to the man who can give an appropriate and witty toast. All the following are good.

Woman—the conundrum of the age. We can't guess her, but we'll never give her up

Our arms are your defence.
Your arms our recompense
Fall in!

Here's to her who halves our sorrows and doubles our joys.

Woman's [illegible] needs no eulogy—she speaks for herself.

Here's to those who love us,
And [illegible] to those who don't,
A [illegible] those who are willing to,
And [illegible] those who won't.

Happy are we met; happy have we been;
Happy may we part; happy meet again.

May we like whom we please, and please whom we like.

Here's to one and only one,
And may that one be she
Who loves but one and only one,
And may that one be me

To Christmas, that anomalous season when fowl murder promotes peace and goodwill

When you go up the hill of prosperity may you never meet any friend coming down.

Here's to all those that I love,
Here's to all those that love me,
And here's to those that love those that I love,
And to those that love those that love me!

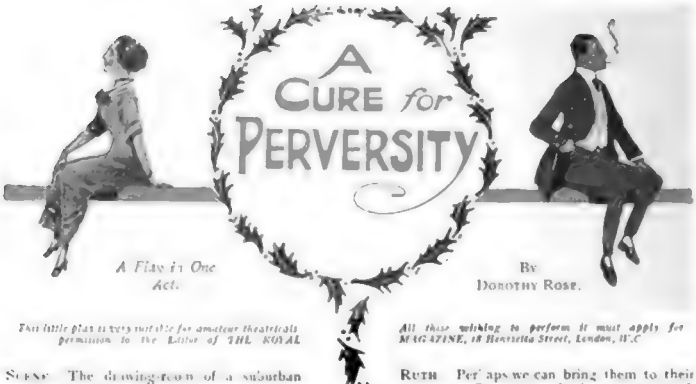
Here's to the love that lies in woman's eyes—and lies, and lies, and lies

May bad luck follow you all the days of your life—and never catch you.

I have known many,
Liked a few,
Love[illegible]
So here's to you!

May your voyage through life be as happy and free
As the dance of a gull on the deep blue sea

To me and you when skies are blue,
To you and me when tempests be,
To both together
In every weather.



A CURE for PERVERSITY

A Play in One Act.

By
DOROTHY ROSE.

This little play is very suitable for amateur theatricals permission to the Editor of THE ROYAL

All those wishing to perform it must apply for MAGAZINE, *18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C*

SCENE. The drawing-room of a suburban house.

TIME. Christmas Eve.

CHARACTERS.

DICK MAYNARD.
RUTH MAYNARD (*his wife*).
JACK DALLAS.
EILEEN VAUGHAN.

(*The drawing-room is cosily furnished with a settee by the fire, one or two tables, and some easy chairs. Fireplace on right-hand side of stage and door on the left. A big bow-window stands by the window at the back of the stage. Flowers and holly about, and enough Christmas litter to look festive.*

(RUTH *discovered sitting on sofa twining up parcels—she rises as door opens, and* DICK *enters in outdoor attire and laden with parcels.*)

RUTH. Oh, I'm glad you're back early, and what lovely Christmassy-looking parcels! (*Kisses him and helps him off with his coat.*) Did you remember the chocolate walnuts and the card for Aunt Tabitha, and the brandy for the sauce? Oh, and the pie dish frills! You haven't forgotten those?

DICK (*pulls out parcel*). Here they are! Now, I've some news for you. I've got a man for your Christmas party, so that the quartette will be complete. I suppose Eileen's coming?

RUTH. Yes, dear, I've had a letter from her, and the poor child's rather down on her luck. Had a tiff with Jack about a letter or something. She vows she'll never speak to him again. Who, what is the matter? (DICK *goes off into fits of laughter.*) Eileen's awfully obstinate; she's quite capable of keeping her promise.

DICK. I know she won't, because it is a matter of fact, it's Jack I've invited to spend Christmas. He didn't say a word to me, and I didn't tell him Eileen was coming. It she's going to behave like a grown-up age there's an end to all the high jinks we'd planned.

RUTH. Perhaps we can bring them to their senses. Of course, they're not engaged, but it's such fun being married I wouldn't have Eileen miss it for the world. (DICK *puts arm round her shoulders*). Don't rumple my hair, Dick, or it'll come down, and I hate looking like a hair restorer advertisement.

DICK. I love you with your hair down, but still (*releases her as bell sounds*). Hark! There's the front door bell. (*Exit* RUTH.) I wonder which of the two young idiots it is? We shall have to do the peacemaker job, I suppose. I know Ruth's dying to have them both billing and cooing again. (*Enter* RUTH *with* EILEEN.) Ah! Eileen! Glad to see you! (*Shakes hands.*) Hope you feel like a regular rollicking Christmas. You're not looking specially fit. Tired after your journey? (*Pulls chair to fire.*)

EILEEN (*sits down*). No, it isn't that. I've been rather worried lately—that's all.

RUTH (*poking fire*). Well, I defy anyone to be worried while Dick is about. He's the most comforting thing on earth after a cup of tea. (*Dodges cushion which* DICK *throws at her.*) I hope it won't be too quiet for you.

EILEEN. Oh, not a bit of it. It'll be lovely with just us three.

RUTH (*with appealing glance at* DICK). Dick and I were afraid it might be a bit dull, and so—(*front door bell rings*).

DICK. I'll go and answer it. (*Exit.*)

EILEEN (*rather mournfully*). Your invitation came just in time. I was about to do something desperate. I hadn't decided whether to join the Salvation Army or go on the stage. (*Stops as door opens and* JACK *and* DICK *enter together.* EILEEN *gives a gasp of annoyance and then stares into the fire.*)

RUTH. This is good of you, Jack. I'm so glad to see you. (*Shakes hands while* DICK *grimaces at* EILEEN.)

JACK. Jolly good of you to have me! Hullo, Eileen! this is a surprise. (*Holds out hand, which she ignores.* RUTH *and* DICK *retire to*

background, and watch the others with amusement.)

EILEEN (*with emphasis*). It is. Had I known you were spending Christmas here I should not have come.

JACK. I'm sure you wouldn't. Your letter was a masterpiece of frankness. There was only one weak point—you forgot to say in what manner I had offended.

EILEEN (*rising*). You oughtn't to need telling, Ruth, may I go up and take my things off, dear?

RUTH (*coming forward*). Of course you may! Come along! (*Exit* RUTH *and* EILEEN. DICK *and* JACK *stand on hearthrug.*)

JACK. I seem to have put my foot into it with Eileen, but I'm dashed if I know how. 'Pon my word, Dick, girls are the very deuce. (*Kicks footstool angrily.*)

DICK. They are! Take my advice, old man, and insist on an explanation. Take a high hand with her. What Eileen wants is a thundering good shaking. Suppose you don't feel like giving it to her?

JACK. I do. But I have some respect for your household peace. Eileen is not exactly of a placid disposition. (*Enter* RUTH.)

RUTH. Would you like to go upstairs, Jack? You know the room. Don't be long, because I've got a job for you.

JACK. Righto! I'll do anything on earth so long as you don't ask me to stuff the turkey. I never know which end you put the stuffing in. (*Exit.*)

RUTH. What *shall* we do with them, Dick? They've simply *got* to thaw. What's the good of putting up clean curtains, and getting mince-pies and chocolates and crackers with toys in them, if those two are going to glare at each other like rival cannibal chiefs? I wouldn't ask any self-respecting turkey to sit at table with them.

JACK (*considering*). You'd be much more likely to break your ankle with those ridiculous shoes.

DICK. I'm not going to have you worried, darling. I'll drop them both into the water-butt first. To you what! We'll leave them to do the decorating. I defy anyone to be stand-offish over such a job. Here, Jack (*as he enters*), we're going to put you on to the decorating. Come and lend me a hand with the holly, there's a good chap. (*They go out, while* RUTH *clears away parcels, and return with loads of evergreen and pair of steps, followed by* EILEEN.)

EILEEN. Do you want me to jump and break my neck?

RUTH. That's right, Eileen, you were always good at decorating. We'll leave you to it. (*Exit* DICK *and* RUTH, *while* EILEEN *glares at* JACK, *who is whistling in a cheerfully aggravating manner.*)

RUTH (*putting her head in door*). Sorry I forgot the mistletoe! But, perhaps, you won't need it! (*Exits.*)

EILEEN. We certainly shan't. Mistletoe's quite unnecessary (*rummages among pile of greenery*)

JACK. So it is! I never wait for it myself. It restricts the scene of operations too much. (*Both proceed to decorate,* JACK *on one side of the room,* EILEEN *on other—*JACK *whistles blithely while* EILEEN *maintains a dignified silence.*)

EILEEN (*trying to reach overmantel in vain*). Bother!

JACK. You seem to be in difficulties. Let me introduce the steps. (*Brings them.*)

EILEEN (*coldly*). Thank you. (*Mounts steps with greenery, string, and scissors.* JACK *returns to his task, but keeps one eye on her.*)

JACK. I hope you're not pricking your fingers—this holly seems to have a double allowance of spikes (*sucks finger ruefully.* EILEEN *proceeds with her work in silence, drops greenery and has to descend steps for it*).

JACK (*louder*). I remarked that I hope you are not pricking your fingers. Such solicitude deserves a polite reply. I'm afraid you were not properly brought up.

(EILEEN *gives a shrug of annoyance and drops scissors; descends steps to rescue them.*)

JACK. You seem to be taking quite a lot of exercise. Better let me finish it. I never drop anything—not even my friends (*meaningly*).

EILEEN. Thank you; it's finished. (*Drags steps to bootcase and proceeds to pull holly from pile.* JACK *does same. Both pull same piece, and neither will let go.*) Oh, bother!

JACK. Exactly! Two "bothers" and a "hang." The trouble seems to be that we're both hauling the same piece. Here you are! Take it, and my blessing with it. It's as prickly as a hedgehog.

EILEEN. You're very kind! (*Mounts steps and gets on top of bookcase so as to reach picture above. JACK, unnoticed, pulls away steps and leaves her stranded. Sits on top step and surveys her work.*)

JACK. Very nice, indeed! A bit lop-sided, though, I think——

EILEEN (*turning*). Bring back the steps at once, please. I want to get down.

JACK. I'm sure you do, though you look very nice there. I hope you don't feel dizzy, because I'm afraid you've got to stay there until——

EILEEN. Do you want me to jump and break my neck?

JACK (*considering*). You'd be much more likely to break your ankle with those ridiculous shoes.

EILEEN (*frowning*). Will you bring back the steps?

JACK. I will, when you tell me what I have done to offend you—not before.

EILEEN. If you don't know, I'm certainly not going to tell you.

JACK (*calmly lighting a cigarette*). That's a pity. (*Descends and offers her a cushion.*) Do make yourself comfortable. You may be there some time yet. (*Postman's knock sounds.*)

EILEEN (*anxiously*). Let me down, Jack. Someone'll be coming in.

JACK (*crossing to door and putting his back against it*). I don't think so. Now, Eileen, play the game and tell me what's the matter. (*Someone turns door handle.*) All right, Ruth, just a minute; Eileen and I are having a little heart to heart talk.

RUTH. It's a letter for you. I'll push it under the door. (*Does so.*)

JACK. I give you my word I haven't a notion what all this fuss is about. (*Turns to* EILEEN.)

EILEEN. Fuss indeed! I think I have a right to make a fuss when you ignore my letter and haven't even the decency to reply to an invitation.

JACK (*severely*). What do you mean?

EILEEN. I mean the invitation I sent you last Monday to meet me at Charing Cross and go to the theatre. Uncle James gave me two stalls for *The Red Cross Girl*; you knew I was dying to see it, and I had a new dress—and—(*brokenly*) oh! it was horrid of you!

JACK. That's where you're wrong (*gravely*). It would have been if I'd received the letter, but I didn't. (*Picks up letter from floor.*)

EILEEN. I can't believe it. I—I almost wish I could.

JACK (*advancing to bookcase*). Perhaps you'll believe it now? This is your letter just forwarded from my flat—it was only posted yesterday. (*Hands it up to her.*)

EILEEN (*incredulously*). It can't be! (*Examines postmark.*) It is that wretched Lydia. Never again will I trust her to post a letter when she's going out with her young man. I might have known she'd forget it. Oh, Jack, I'm so sorry.

JACK (*bringing steps*). Come down and tell me just *how* sorry!

EILEEN (*descending*). I am a little beast, Jack. You will forgive me, won't you? (*Pauses on steps and smiles bewitchingly.*)

JACK. What are you going to give me if I do? (*Lifts her down.*) Wait till we get that mistletoe! (*Enter* RUTH *and* DICK *with parcels and letters.*)

RUTH. Ah! you two. Not finished yet? What *have* you been doing?

JACK. We've just decided that some mistletoe is absolutely essential. Eileen agrees with me; don't you? (*Turns to* EILEEN, *who smiles and blushes.*)

EILEEN. Yes; I've changed my mind about it.

JACK. Well, I'm going out to get some. (*Looks at* EILEEN.)

EILEEN. I'll come with you! (*Exeunt laughing.*)

DICK (*turning to* RUTH). What did I tell you? Decorating's cured them.

A Dartymoor Mist

Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was—on the go!

By Jessie Pope.

Mr. John Pelham Fortescue, bachelor—familiarly known as Ruddy on account of his hair—was lazily and luxuriously engaged in the mysteries of his morning toilette. His bedroom window commanded a soft, melting view of a distant flank of Dartmoor; there were trout rods and their trimmings in various corners of the room, and an open fly book and a half-smoked cigarette lay side by side on the dressing-table. That Ruddy was a light-hearted bachelor anybody could see from his good-natured, whimsical face, though very few people knew he was on the wrong side of forty.

It had been said more than once that Ruddy Fortescue was "a house-party in himself," and when in April he had seen Frank and Muriel Remington off at Paddington, in the capacity of best man, the happy pair had told him again and again there would always be a room for him in their bungalow near Okehampton. After a lapse of two months Ruddy had taken them at their word, with the idea in the back of his mind that there was always his own snug little fishing hut on the heather-clad banks of the Okement to retire to, in case his friends' hymeneal raptures wearied him.

But so far they hadn't, and when on this particular morning he saw his long, lanky host and his plump, pretty hostess walking round the garden hand in hand, he began to hasten his toilette to join them, and picking up his hair-brushes, bent towards the mirror. As he did so, the self-satisfied expression on his well-favoured face grew hard and rigid, and a disconcerted look of disgust leapt into his kind blue eyes, for Ruddy saw, with a sudden pang, that his hair was going decidedly thin on the top!

In the great crises of a man's life, it is said that his past rolls up before him, and now as Ruddy glared at that half-concealed circular patch of scalp, the gay bachelor years rose in his mind like a picture, the river picnics, the tennis tournaments, the fishing exploits, the pretty faces of the girls he might have married, but at whose weddings he had preferred to assist hilariously as best man.

Ruddy's humorous mouth grew very grave as he finished dressing; then, calling "good morning" to his friends in the front garden, he strolled down the village street to the general shop, for a bottle of hair restorer.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast, and so it did in Ruddy's as he returned surreptitiously to the bungalow with the precious liquid in his pocket. A bit thin on the top—what of it! He wasn't going to be an old boy yet. He'd kept his end up among men fifteen years his junior, and he'd do it still.

Ignorant of his return, his host and hostess were sitting on the verandah when he re-entered the bedroom, and their conversation, as they opened their letters, floated in through the window.

"I've heard from Aunt Mary, and she's coming to-day," remarked Frank.

"Good!" ejaculated Muriel. "I'm so glad. Ruddy's a perfect darling, but we want a fourth badly."

"Yes! He's a real good chap, but it's a case of two's company and three's none, and sometimes, my queen, I think we asked him down a little too soon, though I shouldn't like him to know it."

"Oh, neither should I, darling one. I'm frightfully fond of him, but with your Aunt Mary here, we'll be able to see more of each other. Besides, it would be excellent if Ruddy were to take a fancy to her."

"Yes," assented Frank, "it's quite time he settled down for his own sake. He might do a lot worse than Aunt Mary, and it would be quite a turn for her. She wants a husband."

"And she keeps so bright and energetic, poor thing!" observed Muriel. "Oh, I do feel so frightfully sorry for old maids and old bachelors."

There was the sound of a kiss, and then Frank remarked:

"Well, I hope you'll be able to make a match; in any case, Ruddy will *have* to pair off with her for politeness sake. But I vote we spring her upon him as a pleasant surprise. Don't mention it at breakfast; we'll walk into Okehampton to meet her."

At that moment the breakfast bell rang, and the young couple, in a sudden enthusiasm for bacon and coffee, chased each other along the verandah in search of it. But the all-pervading aroma from the kitchen roused no answering spark in the wounded bosom of the eavesdropper as he tried to remove the tell-tale traces of the hair tonic with a towel.

"Couldn't help hearing," he muttered grimly. "Just as well. I know where I am now. So the maiden aunt is coming down to take the old boy off their hands. Fixed up their match for them, so they think they'll fix up mine. *Very* friendly of them, I'm sure! I may be getting a dull old dog, but I'm not absolutely senile yet."

He smiled darkly, and gave a final glance at his very presentable self in the mirror before joining the connubial breakfast table.

"Well, old Ruddy!" "Hullo, old chum!" called out Frank and Muriel as he entered, his curly, red hair carefully brushed, but still looking a trifle damp. Ruddy responded in suitable terms, tweaked Muriel's rather large ear, and smacked Frank's rather narrow shoulders with a cheery vigour which betrayed no shadow of the clouds looming big on his horizon.

"Muriel and I are walking into Okehampton this morning, old chap," said Frank. "What will *you* be doing?"

"Oh—minding my own business, I expect," replied their guest, helping himself generously to eggs and bacon.

"Well, you've got your rod to mend, you know," suggested Muriel, "and lots of letters to write."

"Thank you, lady. Anything else?"

"No, only don't get into mischief, and perhaps we'll bring a little surprise packet back with us for a good child."

Ruddy grinned a little sourly. Her thoughtless allusion to his juvenility made him wince, and when they had gone and the fisherman, pipe in mouth, was busy over his gear, that verandah conversation recurred to his mind not once but many times.

He was just sharpening his hooks and rubbing vaseline on his reel when sounds of bustle in the front of the bungalow disturbed him, and, rod in hand, he went into the hall to investigate. A large dress box, labelled "Miss Mary Remington," stood at the front door, a cab was at the gate, and the sight of the lady arguing with the cabman proved that the maiden aunt had arrived alone, and that Frank and Muriel had missed her. Her summer frock was very smart and *very* skimpy, and, from a back view, the new-comer appeared almost as juvenile as Muriel. Next moment she turned and revealed a hard-lined, peevish countenance; like many an old ewe dressed lamb fashion, she would not have looked so old if the costume had been less lamb-like.

"Oh Lor'!" groaned Ruddy, but before he could disappear the sharp black eyes had caught sight of him, and the grim peevishness of the face changed, as if by magic, to an alluring, not to say skittish, expression.

"O-*ho!*" she exclaimed in a gay and gushing contralto, "this must be Ruddy! Forgive me, I mean Mr. Fortescue. But I have heard so much about you from dear Frank and Muriel. How *do* you do? So very glad to make your acquaintance!"

Ruddy shook hands with polite submission.

"They've gone to Okehampton to meet you," he said. "They'll be awfully sick to have missed you."

"But why Okehampton?" she remarked sharply. "I came to Bridestowe. The guard told me that was nearest, but I expect he was wrong. However, it doesn't matter the *least* little atom. We can just sit on this *delightful* verandah and you shall tell me the names of all these quaint old tors. They are so *deliciously* romantic—don't you think so?"

"Yes, rather," said Ruddy. "I quite agree."

"I *knew* you would. I can see it in your face. I believe you are just as sentimental as I am. Come, confess it, and say that you love romance more than anything else in the world."

Ruddy smiled, that slow, whimsical smile that had done so much execution.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I think I prefer trout fishing."

"Why, of *course* you do," she ejaculated

pliantly. "No doubt you are right. Well, you shall tell me all about your hobby instead, the poor little tiny wee fish, and"—here she shuddered picturesquely—"the great big worms you catch them with. I'm certain we shan't find the time long till those silly children return, shall we?"

"Not at all," agreed Ruddy again.

"Then, before we settle down," said his vivacious companion, "I'll just go and see where the maids have put the trunks. But I won't be more than ten minutes, I promise, so *au revoir! A bientôt!*" and she disappeared upstairs with a bewitching smile and as much grace as her skin-tight skirt would admit. Ruddy also retired swiftly. He put his rod and tackle together, slung a few things into a bag, took his coat over his arm, and stole stealthily out of the back door, leaving the following note on the dressing-table:

DEAR FRANK,—I'm off for a few days' fishing. The trout are calling me. Hope you'll understand. The prize-packet has arrived, so I have no fear that you and Muriel will be lonely.

Love to you both.

Yours ever,

RUDDY.

"Serve them right," he said as he strode down the village street to the inn to hire the trap which would take him to the nearest accessible point to his fishing hut under Gray Tor. "It will be a nasty smack for them, I know, but serves them right. I *daren't* stay in the same house as that woman. She'd marry me in a week, and I should cut my throat in a fortnight."

He looked over his shoulder apprehensively, but there was no pursuit; in fact, Ruddy was half-a-mile out of the village, seated in a rickety trap, with his luggage behind and a fat Dartmoor pony in front, before the lady discovered her loss. But the fugitive saw two small figures coming along the road from Okehampton and recognised tall Frank and plump Muriel returning from their fruitless errand.

At the sight of those two midget-like figures, walking unconsciously to their doom, Ruddy's conscience smote him. After all, what was more natural than that they should long to be alone? He ought to have known that, and now, if he was a real pal, he would go back and face the music for

From a back view, the newcomer appeared almost as juvenile as Muriel. Next moment she turned and revealed a hard-lined, peevish countenance.

their sakes. But the vision of the last smile Aunt Mary fired at him before he fled, hardened his heart. No, he could not and would not stand that woman. The thing was impossible, and the horror of Aunt Mary spurred him forward.

"Here, Greenaway," he remarked to the driver, "get a move on the pony, or we shall be all day getting there!"

The brown-faced Jehu grunted his assent, and with the remark that it was "going to be a bit thick up along," stirred the pony to greater effort.

It *was* getting a bit thick up along—for the sunshine of the morning had been transformed into pearly gleams through heavy, low-hanging clouds which were becoming entangled with the tops of the tors. But Ruddy loved it.

Leaving his bag at Gray Tor Farm to be carried down to the fishing hut a mile away, and also instructions with the friendly farmer's wife to get the place tidied up and ready for him and a fire lighted, Ruddy set off on foot and struck the river some three miles lower down to work up stream with the rest of the day before him, and his small but snug abode awaiting him at the end of it.

Life grew sunny again, though the clouds were hanging lower on the tors each side of him, and putting his rod together he selected a "blue upright" from his fly book, and settled down to the complete enjoyment of the sport he loved best. With almost his first cast he rose a fine fellow that fought like a tiger. Ruddy put him down at a pound and a half during the struggle, but in the end the trout was one up, for he got away in a tumbling pool with the "blue upright" in his lip.

After that, Ruddy's luck was right out, and try all he knew he couldn't get a rise. He fished with a tail fly alone, then took that off and substituted a dropper, to no purpose. He tried all the tricks, dappling over the water as if for chub, dragging his lure across the stream in little jerks; he fished up stream, fished down stream, tried a sunken fly and a floating fly, but though the trout were rising all round they refused to take the lure.

Finally, when the mist was drifting along the valley and meeting the clouds on the tors, he turned it up, and, with the philosophy of a good sportsman, lit his pipe and, with his rod on his shoulder and his empty creel on his back, made tracks for home and supper. But he felt a little annoyed and not a little depressed. Even the trout were laughing at him, and the thought of the long evening was unattractive.

For the first time in his life, the bachelor felt the need of a mate. And yet, looking back, not one of the girls who might have consented to fill such a position had been the girl he wanted, and in the films of mist that came to meet him like regiments of white cavalry, he wove the fancy of his ideal woman, a mist maiden of his dreams, and experienced the sudden heart hunger for someone of his own to work for, and care for, and live for.

"I want my supper; that's my trouble," he said to himself as he reached his fishing hut. "I hope old Mother Coysh has left everything ready."

She had. The interior of the fisherman's den was a bright and cheery contrast to the thick and dismal evening outside. The flames of the wood fire burning cheerily in the open hearth were reflected on the polished pitch-pine walls, and a meal of cold chicken and bacon, whortleberries and junket, home-made bread, cheese and cream, and the sight of a big jug of steaming coffee, warmed the cockles of Ruddy's heart. His spirits revived, and, after a highly satisfactory meal, he settled down in his shabby, comfortable arm-chair with a book.

The book was attractive, and for a couple of hours or more it kept Ruddy keenly interested. Then he had a look at the weather, and found the white mist came flush with the doorway, but it was moving before a breeze, and would probably be clear by morning. A vast isolation seemed to have settled on that remote spot on the desolate moorland, and Ruddy turned in again to the fireside with a shiver.

And then there came three slow, distinct knocks at the door. Ruddy sat upright with a start. The sound was so sudden, so eerie, so unexpected that his heart gave a big thump, and his pulses began to beat quite fast of their own accord. He pushed his chair back, strode over to the door, and opened it.

A girl stood just outside—framed in the mist. Her face was white as paper, there were black shadows round her tragic grey eyes, her dark hair was dishevelled and wet with the mist, her white cotton frock was torn and soiled. One small muddy hand hung limply at her side, the other held a climbing pole, on the top of which was fastened—ironic touch!—a tuft of white heather.

"The Mist Maiden!" ejaculated Ruddy under his breath. Then he said aloud:

"Hullo! What's the matter?"

Her body rested against his for support, her head drooped on his shoulder, and it was evident she was long past caring whose shoulder her head leant upon. [*Page 164, col. 1.*]

She tried to answer, but at first the pale lips only puckered and quivered; then in a thin, moaning voice of utter exhaustion she muttered:

"I've lost my way."

Her eyelids half closed, and she swayed backwards and forwards where she stood.

"You poor thing!" said Ruddy, and he put a quick arm round her. "Come in to the fire!"

Her body rested against his for support, her head drooped on his shoulder, and it was evident she was long past caring whose shoulder her head leant upon. He drew her across the room and helped her to his big armchair. He put his big bachelor kettle on the fire, and heated the coffee over his spirit stove. He wrapped a rug round her shoulders, and gently removed her saturated shoes, and all the time like a tired animal she watched him with her big, apathetic grey eyes, conscious only of warmth and rest and comfort.

When the coffee was ready she just stared at it, and made no effort to take it from him, so, supporting her head with his other hand, Ruddy held the cup to her lips, and smiled with relief to see a faint colour come to the wan, drawn cheeks as the hot drink warmed her chilled blood; and by the time he had fed her like a child with little bits of chicken and bread, her dull, weary eyes began to show a spark of intelligence.

"Look here," he said, "if you can just manage to take off your stockings I'll put your feet into some hot water. They're as cold as ice."

She hardly seemed to understand, and when at last she acted on his suggestion it was not without a certain fretful weariness.

"My word," remarked Ruddy, as he dried her feet, and slipped them into a pair of warm stockings of his own, "you *have* been through it!"

She nodded, and the ghost of a smile crossed her lips.

"I started from Tavistock—ages ago," she whispered huskily; "then the clouds came down and I got lost among them."

Ruddy nodded sympathetically.

"Those clouds were a nuisance," he said. "They spoilt my sport, too. You've been in the river, haven't you?" She nodded. "And in a bog or two?" She nodded again, and shuddered.

"There, there," he said, "we won't talk about it. You're more comfortable now, eh?"

Instead of answering, a sudden wild intreaty came into her eyes.

"Oh, you won't turn me out again to-night?" she pleaded.

"Of *course* not," he said, patting her hand soothingly. "The great thing you want now is sleep."

She turned her head hopelessly from side to side.

"I shall never go to sleep again," she whimpered piteously; "whenever I shut my eyes I see the black rushing water, and the slimy rocks, and the things that keep jumping out of the mist at me. I can't sleep—I shall dream about it."

"Oh, no you won't," said Ruddy, slipping a cushion behind her head. "You're all right now! You'll dream of that waltz you danced at your last ball—round and round, round and round, round and—like this."

He whistled a languid waltz melody very softly until her eyes closed, her little dark, untidy head nestled further into the cushion—the short quick breathing grew deep and regular, and she slept. Ruddy smiled, stopped whistling very gradually, and sat and watched her.

"Poor child," he murmured, "she was absolutely dead to the wide. I'm jolly glad I hadn't put my lamp out."

Suddenly he leant forward and peeped at the little half-closed left hand lying on the arm of the chair. There were no rings on it, and he smiled again.

Although he had intended to keep vigil till morning, Ruddy also dropped off in the sma', wee hours, and when he awoke the sun was up, the sky was blue, the mist had cleared, and the liquid babble of the river came chattering merrily in at the open window of the hut. The Mist Maiden still lay back in the chair by the glowing embers, sleeping so soundly that when Ruddy knocked over a log of wood he was trying to place on the fire without a sound, it never disturbed her.

"I bet she'll be ready for breakfast when she wakes," he said, and taking his rod he crept silently forth and down to the river, and caught a couple of trout without any trouble. Then, peeping through the window and finding his visitor still asleep, he strode up to Gray Tor Farm for eggs and milk, softly whistling the waltz tune that had done such good service over night, with his heart as high as the little fleecy white clouds sailing through the blue above him.

Farmer Coysh and his wife had gone betimes to Okehampton market, so taking the eggs in his pocket and a tin of cream and a can of new milk in his hand, he hurried back, for it suddenly occurred to

him that if his guest awoke and found herself alone she would be frightened to death. As he approached the hut, a delicious fragrance of frying fish assailed his nostrils, and peeping in—lo and behold! there was the slim, white-gowned figure of the Mist Maiden, bending over the frying-pan cooking the trout for breakfast.

"Hullo!" he said. "Don't they smell good?"

She turned, her face a little flushed—perhaps with the cooking—her grey eyes shining, her lips parted in a smile that was half-shy, half-merry.

"Oh," she said, "I hope I've done the right thing. Did you want them cooked?"

"Rather," replied Ruddy. "But I thought you were too cooked to do it. Feel better?"

"Yes, I'm all right, thank you—a bit stiff and sore, but I went down to the river and had a wash, and then I felt so hungry, I thought I'd make a start on the breakfast."

"What a sensible young woman you are!" said Ruddy.

"I wasn't last night," she demurred, shaking her neat, dark head. "But I'd really had an awful time—and I do want to say thank you."

"Not at all," protested Ruddy. "As a matter of fact I owe you all the gratitude for dropping in in a friendly manner and cheering me up."

The girl gave a dear little liquid giggle. "Well, if you look upon it in that way—" she began.

"Anyhow," said Ruddy, "breakfast's the first consideration. I'll make the coffee and boil the eggs and you can finish off the little fishes. By the way," he added, peeping into the pan, "I do believe you know how to cook."

"Why, of course. Do you think I spend all my time losing my way on the moor from Tavistock to Okehampton? I shouldn't have done that yesterday if the clouds hadn't come down and swallowed up the landmarks. It was rather awful—I'm longing to tell you all about it."

And when they were contentedly discussing their alfresco meal—for they spread their table on a big flat rock by the river—she gave him a fairly exhaustive account of her adventures—the enthusiastic start in the sunshine, the joyful discovery of the white heather, her lunch among the bracken, and then the cloud difficulty.

"It's not much use taking an intelligent interest in a map and a compass when the mist comes down like a thick white chiffon veil right in front of your nose," she observed pathetically. "Then I got tangled up in the river; when I thought I was on the bank I found I was on an island—you know how the stream keeps dividing—and I kept falling over the rocks and scraping myself horribly. But I did try to keep my end up, and my motto all the time was, 'It's dogged as does it!'

"The bogs finished me. I nearly lost my pole in one, white heather and all, and then I think I lost my head and got sick with fright. I forget what happened after that; it was like a ghastly nightmare, and I think I was just going to lie down and die when my bit of white heather suddenly remembered its lines, and I saw the blessed light in your window. But I don't think you can ever realise what an absolutely horrible time I had."

"Oh, yes I can," said Ruddy. "I saw you at the end of it. But what on earth possessed you to take a big tramp on the moor all by yourself?"

"Well, you see," she replied with an enigmatical smile, "I was running away from a dragon!"

"Why, so was I!" said Ruddy. Their eyes met and they laughed sympathetically, yet somehow they questioned each other no more, because each felt it was the touch of mystery that lent the situation half its magic.

"Anybody who can cook trout as well as this ought to know how to catch them," said Ruddy. "I'll give you a lesson in fly-throwing after breakfast."

The Mist Maiden's eyes sparkled at the prospect as she looked up at the big, red-haired fisherman. Then her face grew grave.

"But oughtn't I to be getting on?"

"Not till this afternoon," said Ruddy resolutely, "when the Coysha come back from market. I'll drive you to Okehampton in their trap—if you'll let me."

The Mist Maiden nodded.

"If you don't mind my being in the way," she said.

"But I like your being in the way," replied Ruddy quickly, and his tone carried conviction.

They washed up the breakfast things and tidied the hut, and then the lesson in trout fishing proceeded with such success that not only was the fish course provided for lunch, but the Mist Maiden, with almost hysterical joy, hooked a half-pounder from her own cast, and decided to have the slim little

fellow stuffed and put in a glass case in honour of the great occasion.

It was while sport was still in progress that the sound of Frank Remington's voice, hailing him from the boulder-strewn path in the larchwood above the hut, brought a frown to Ruddy's face. Excusing himself rather abruptly, he strode up the hut path to meet his late host and hostess, who came hurrying down it. But before they met, Muriel's sharp eyes had caught a glimpse of the white skirt by the river.

"Look, Frank!" she exclaimed, horror-struck, "there's a girl there! So *that's* the sort of trout that was calling him!"

"The villain!" said Frank, with a grin—"hush, don't say anything! Here he comes."

"Hullo!" called Ruddy, advancing among the tall, straight trunks. "What have *you* come for? Is anything the matter?"

"Yes!" replied Muriel in a tone of cold rebuke. "We've lost Aunt Mary."

"Congratulate you!" replied Ruddy with enthusiasm.

"Don't be a pig," retorted Muriel. "You've got to help us find her anyhow."

"Not I," replied their guest. "I'll do anything else in the world for you, my dear child, but I will *not* help you to find Aunt Mary."

"But you must, old chap," said Frank. "We're very anxious about her. We hoped you might have seen something of her."

"I saw quite enough of her yesterday at the bungalow," replied Ruddy, "and without any disrespect to your relative, Frank, I think you were pretty poor sort of pals, both of you, to turn the old Guy Fawkes loose on me."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Muriel. "Why she never——"

"Hullo, Muriel!" cried Frank, for the Mist Maiden, hearing voices, was coming up the path. "Just look! I'm blest! *Here she is!*"

Ruddy turned quickly.

"Who?" he exclaimed.

"Aunt Mary!" replied Frank—and the next moment he and Muriel were kissing the Mist Maiden with evident joy and relief.

"Yes—I'm his Aunt Mary, right enough," she said, looking across at Ruddy through their embraces, "though I'm eighteen months younger than he is. But I insist on my title, because he's the cheekiest nephew in the world."

"Then who was that—that elderly person I ran away from at the bungalow?" stammered the flabbergasted fisherman.

"That was Miss Leech, my dragon. She'd got right on my nerves, so I made her come on and bring the luggage by train while I walked across the moor myself. She liked the arrangement immensely because I think she was rather keen on meeting Mr. Fortescue," and here the Mist Maiden's grey eyes looked with mischievous inquiry into Ruddy's.

"That's me," he remarked.

"I know," she replied, "but I hadn't the least idea last night. I only guessed this morning when I saw your name on the stockings I was wearing."

"What's all this?" ejaculated Muriel "Last night? This morning? You wearing Ruddy's stockings?"

"Look here, Aunt Mary, what have you been up to now? We require an explanation," said Frank with a grin of anticipation.

"Right-o!" said his Aunt. "You shall have it. Do you think we might ask them to stop to lunch?" she added to her host.

Ruddy looked dubious.

"I'm afraid Miss Leech will be lonely without them," he said with his slow, whimsical smile.

"Oh, she's gone," put in Muriel. "She went back to town last night; her engagement ended yesterday."

"Then the post of companion is vacant,' said Ruddy, looking straight into Aunt Mary's grey eyes. She nodded laughingly, but she blushed a little, too.

They all had lunch together, and though the fisherman and the Mist Maiden would have much preferred to be alone, it really didn't matter, for they decided in a ridiculously short time that they would always have their lunch together in future, and breakfast and dinner into the bargain.

"But look here, little girl," said Ruddy on the evening when they made their compact, "there's something I ought to tell you about myself, which may make all the difference to your feelings. I'm the wrong side of forty, and I'm going a bit thin on the top."

Aunt Mary giggled.

"I know all about that," she said. "I saw it when you were kneeling down manipulating my foot-bath."

Ruddy looked a bit rueful.

"And do you mind very much?" he said.

"Come here, and I'll show you how much," she replied and, taking his curly ginger poll between her small, brown hands, she dropped a light little kiss on the place where the wool ought to have grown.

MY FAVOURITE YULETIDE PASTIME

Mr. Thompson, being of an obliging disposition, finds pleasure in acting as substitute for the lost nutcrackers.

The Christmas Amusements of Our Faithful Friends the Humorous Artists, Limned by Themselves.

By F. Sidney.

Most of us would reply, "The Girls!" if asked what is our favourite amusement at the festive season. Never do case-hardened bachelors shudder to their matrimonial doom in such coveys as at that time of year which some people love to call "Xmas." How pants the nut after the noisette in the pudding season! Hark to the flappers flapping furiously! The mistletoe creaks in its branches, and every quiet corner shades its hand-holding, giggling couple.

It is a rich and comely thing to kiss at C'is'mas, and the pursuit of love beggars any praise at the disposal of the present scribbler. Writing as an old, old man, he can only put on record how his ancient heart warms at the sight of young things coquetting with the tender passion—striplings forgetting to caress their puerile moustaches as they gaze upon Her, and damsels neglecting their ices to watch him forgetting to caress his puerile moustache as he . . . etc. What sings the poet in this connection, plucking ecstatic lute-strings?

I cannot sigh for perfect Jane,
I cannot die for fetching Flo,
Daphne regards me with disdain,
Joyce turned me down a year ago.
Yet when the Christmas lanterns gleam,
And holly glistens in the hall,
I feel so jolly, it would seem,
By George! that I could kiss them all!

Poets are born and not made. They fret out their little feverish lives dallying with the more fleeting emotions, singing sonnets to the sunflower, or babbling ballades to a

The musical monologues indulged in by Mr. Thomas Henry are apparently more popular with the small boy than with his elders.

Mr. H. M. Brock is evidently a cheerful giver, for he considers giving Christmas boxes an ideal pastime.

buttercup. But at Christmas my masters, we are all temporarily, for the nonce—or nonsense—poets. We are the slaves of the fair, vassals of Beauty. Ah, why does Christmas come but once a year?

The humorous artists have recorded, with quivering pencil, any Christmas pastime but that of sporting with Amaryllis in the conservatory. They do not depict romantic passages—and nothing can be more romantic than a passage if it is not too well illuminated, and none but you and She are there. But humorous artists are super-men. The ordinary delights are not for them. Their wit is too mordant for flirtation—they always see the humorous side, and a sense of humour is death to love-making. Theirs not to plumb those divine and blissful depths of futility that cause you and me to descend on one knee, disregarding our faultlessly cut dress trousers, press a maiden's rosy fingers to our lips and cry: "Miss Smith—may I say Barbara?—I love you!"

And to the ranks of these super-men may be added those of the sports. They would rather turn a mitrailleuse on the pheasants, or drop a 75-millimetre shell on a partridge's nose than indulge the tender passion. They are great blond beasts—men of gore.

Christmas is a great time for these men. Given a gun, a hundred cartridges or so, and a rabbit, a dozen of them can have a full and exciting day's sport—harmless, helpful, and beyond criticism by the crankiest humanitarian.

I know one rabbit quite intimately that entertains one of these Christmas parties

A comfortable chair, a footstool, and a cigar are all that Mr. Weldon Halliday requires in order to achieve bliss.

Mr. Alfred Leete's chief occupations at the festive season are dodging liver spots, and swallowing large doses of noxious liquids.

Meanwhile the rabbit waxes fat, and lives in hopes of another day's sport next year, when he may wreak even greater vengeance on the conspirators against his life and well-being

every year. He lives in a twelve-acre field, and he would not miss his annual day's sport for worlds. I saw seven guns once attempting to compass his downfall. Two were ambushed in a ditch, one was acting as an air-scout among the branches of a tall poplar tree, while the remaining four pressed home a daring frontal attack. The guns roared, the tide of battle ebbed and flowed, the stricken field was strewn with empty cartridge cases.

More than once a flanking movement threatened his communications, but the rabbit eventually lured his pursuers into entanglements artfully disguised as sheep-hurdles, where I left them at dusk, profane but undaunted, trying vainly to extricate themselves. I did not see the next day's battle.

Of course, nobody knows what may have happened before another Christmas comes round, but, judging from the language I heard, I judge that those sportsmen are determined to have the rabbit's scalp sooner or later. So that even a rabbit may have a not inglorious mission in life when he provides healthful amusement for seven able-bodied men.

The joys of skiing are advocated by Mr. Starr Wood, who is in a position to speak with authority.

THE PERIL BY NIGHT.

A Story of Treachery.

By Henry Erskine South.

Business failures, rise in food prices, and closing of the European Stock Exchanges were the outcome of the Red Empire's decision to dispute the action of the Blue nation in making war upon a country whose freedom she had vowed to defend.

The Blue nation had long looked forward to this day, and had made preparations for it. For years preceding this crisis the Blues had been steadily augmenting their Navy, until it bid fair to rival even the wonderful sea-strength of their island foes.

The Blues had ever maintained a perfect army of spies and agents throughout the length and breadth of the Red Island, and their knowledge of its topography was wonderful.

Especially had they bidden their army of secret service men—waiters, clerks, and suchlike—to take the greatest notice of strategic railway bridges, with a view to their being destroyed in the event of the Blues making a sudden raid upon the Red coasts, and they laid great stress upon the fact that no bridge was in more urgent need of destruction than the Great Northland Cantilever.

This was a world-famous structure spanning the great sea arm of the Northland River, connecting the Northern and Southern

Railway systems. It had been the object of much attention on the part of the Blue agents, and into the hands of three of their number was given the particularly dangerous job of destroying it.

The necessity for blowing up this bridge was especially emphasised, as just above it was the great Eastern Depôt of the Reds, with its huge docks and stores.

If, therefore, the centre span of the great bridge were destroyed and fell into the deep-water channel of the river, it would prevent navigation, and the Red fleet would be shut out from its all-important base. The three Blue experts to whom was given this patriotic job were all resident in the Northland capital, and had been there for more than a year. They had had time to survey the ground and to examine the locale and all its surroundings thoroughly.

One was a foreign-correspondence clerk in the Northern Mercantile Bank, one a waiter at the Great Northern Railway Hotel, and the chief, also a waiter, was at an hotel nestling on the North shore in the shadow of the great bridge itself.

One afternoon the leader received a wire addressed thus: "*Gussen, Royal Hotel, North Kingsford.* YES. — *Smith, Palace Hotel, Ludstown.*"

Immediately on receipt of this, he telegraphed to his two accomplices to meet him the same night at his hotel at North Kingsford.

Gussen was living in a very modest lodging in a little street not far from the North Kingsford Railway Station and Goods Yard. A great many men in the employ of the railway company lived there, and he had made some progress in their friendship since he came to the local hotel.

For some time he had been "walking out" with the only daughter of his landlord, and this proceeding irritated to a degree of frenzy Alec Havers, a fine young shunter in the employ of the railway company, who wanted Janie Redburn for himself.

Old Redburn, Gussen's landlord, was a signalman. His cabin was at the north end of the great bridge.

Gussen's two friends arrived at the hotel in which he was employed, and sat down at one of the tables in the coffee-room, calling for drinks and a light supper.

As he brought them the beer they had asked for, he leant over the table to fill their glasses, and murmured almost inaudibly: "Station bridge, eleven," in the language of the Blue nation.

While they were eating their supper, the door of the coffee-room opened abruptly, and a sailor walked in. He sat down at a table, and, after ordering some food, took a paper from his pocket and commenced to read.

Pasted inside were slips of paper containing descriptions of three men and their photographs.

While he devoured his supper, he glanced casually at the two men in the corner of the room opposite him, comparing the descriptions on his slips with the men seated at the table; he also looked attentively at Gussen when he brought in some glasses, but carefully concealed his face.

At 11 p.m. Gussen came and announced closing-time, and the few people in the coffee-room went out, his friends among the number.

A short time afterwards he left by the back entrance. As he got to the end of the little street and near the station bridge, he saw two figures outlined against the rays of a street lamp in front of him, and overtaking them, he whispered "Blue" in an undertone.

They crossed the road bridge over the Great Northland main line, with its maze of sidings and kaleidescopic array of signal-lamps, and at that moment a fast train thundered through beneath them on its way to the South, and on to the great bridge.

Brunner muttered in Gussen's ear: "The last one, eh, my friend?"

"No; the last one must be a freight train. The passenger vary in speed, but the freight trains leaving here for the South arrive at the centre of the bridge in exactly four minutes. I've timed some fifty of them, and they vary very little. The average is what I mentioned, and on that we will work. But come along to my place, and let's get out of this cursed damp. We shall have quite enough of it later on."

"Is that you, Mr. Gussen?" he heard Mrs. Redburn say as they entered his lodgings.

"Yes, Mrs. Redburn," he answered; "it's myself and two friends. May I have a little hot water to make some grog, for it's a raw night?"

She brought some in, shutting the door as she went out.

Before sitting down, Gussen opened the door and called out: "Is the good man on duty to-night, Mrs. Redburn?"

"Ay," was the answer from the back regions, "and a rare night, too. Them

drivers will find signals bad to see in the mist. Young Alec Havers was here a bit ago before he went on duty, and he said it was that thick you couldn't see your hand in front of ye at times."

They all three sat down at the little table, made their hot grog, lit their pipes, and prepared to listen to what Gussen had to say.

"Let's get to business," Gussen began; "you know the job we've in front of us to-night. The orders from headquarters are *urgent*, and cannot be put off for a single day. That's why I wired you. The bridge's centre span must come down before dawn, and we must do it at all costs to ourselves."

"Good!" exclaimed Brunner. "We will do our best. But let us know, my friend, what the programme is."

"Yes," observed Stedman, "let us know what you have thought out. We have brought only half the gelatine. I suppose you have the other half, and the Professor's time fuses?"

"Yes," said Gussen; "the rest of the explosive is in the cupboard with my clothes, and those precious fuses are under a loose board in the floor. I'll get them out."

He took up a dingy hearthrug and, with a screwdriver, forced up a board, and discovered six small tin boxes, each wrapped in cotton-wool.

He removed them with great care and placed them on the table, saying: "They are all timed for exactly five minutes—one minute more than the average time I spoke of, so as to allow for delays. Then all *we* have to do is to fix them on the centre truck of the South-bound freight train that leaves the yard at 1.30 a.m., and then—well, we shall see."

"But how is the explosion going to bring down the centre span?" asked Brunner. "It won't wreck the supporting cantilever."

"I hope it *will*, my friend," said Gussen grimly. "The stuff we have is the most powerful explosive known, and if it only shatters a part of a cantilever the great weight will do the rest. Besides, I propose to remain hidden in the yard after the train has gone, and, if anything *does* go wrong, I myself will take a packet of gelatine, walk on to the bridge, and fix it to the cantilever with my own hands. If I get blown up I can't help it. My duty is to bring down the bridge, and I'll do it."

They all three bent over the table, and began their dangerous work of fitting the fuses to the gelatine.

After all six bombs had been fitted with the fuses, they packed them into hand-bags with the greatest care, and left the house. They had not far to go, which was fortunate for them, as the bombs weighed 30 lbs. each, for at the end of the street was a wall with steps cut in it which divided the goods yard from the road.

They carefully picked their way over it, and landed safely on the other side. The other two then followed Gussen's lead, and crept across sidings and under trucks until they halted at the warning gesture of his hand.

They were then under the shelter of a big cattle-van, and the freight train which was their goal was noisily puffing up and down on the next line of rails to them, busily engaged in being made up all ready for its South-bound journey at 1.30 a.m.

Gussen recognised Alec Havers' voice, and swore softly under his breath. He took out his watch and looked at the luminous dial in the faint light of the yard lamps. It was nearly 1.15.

He waited a few moments longer, and then made a gesture with his hand, and they all three crept forward stealthily.

Meanwhile, the sailor, on leaving the hotel, proceeded to the railway station by a somewhat roundabout route.

That he was an *habitué* of the locality was evident, for he went down the street towards the shore, scaled a barbed wire fence, and got on to the embankment leading to the bridge; then he crept up the slope and got on to the track, and proceeded to walk towards the station.

As he came to the signal cabin he paused, thought a moment, and then walked up the steep wooden ladder leading to it; he opened the door and walked in, being immediately confronted by old Jock Redburn, the signalman, who presented a pistol at his head.

"Oh, it's you, sir," said Jock, lowering his weapon. "One has to be careful at these times. One never knows. What can I do for you?"

"Well done, Jock!" cried the sailor "You're ready, and not to be caught napping. That's just as it should be. I want to know how many trains pass *South* between now and 2 a.m."

"That's easily told, Captain Anstruther," said old Jock. "There's the fast down mail at 11.45, a local train that leaves North Kingsford at 12.15, and the goods making up in the yard now. She's timed to leave at 1.30."

"Good!" said the other. "Now, Redburn, listen to me attentively, for a good deal

depends on you. I needn't go into the whole business, as it's too long. But this much I'll say. That waiter, Gussen, who lodges with you is one of the most trusted and dangerous agents of the Blue Government. As you know, he's been here for the last year, waiting for orders to destroy the bridge if it should be necessary, and this afternoon he received them. He and his two friends have been watched and shadowed for the last six months or more, and we've only been waiting for him to get that wire in order to arrest them."

"But, good Heavens, captain!" said Redburn, "fancy the fellow being in my house all this time, and him a spy. And making love to my girl, too. Tell me what I can do, sir, and I'll do it."

"All I want you to do, Jock," said Anstruther, "is to lower your starting signal five minutes *before* that goods is ready to leave. As soon as the driver sees your green light he'll whistle three times, and start at once. He'll pull up when half his train has passed this box. Directly he starts, you'll raise your advance starting signal, so as to prevent him going on to the bridge. I and all our fellows will then search the train from end to end. I've at least twenty men on the bridge now, and another thirty close handy, only waiting for my whistle to come out. When I leave here I'll go to the driver of the goods and tell him all I've told you."

Anstruther opened the door, and went down the ladder on to the permanent way, and across the rails to the goods yard, where he found the train in process of being made up. The engine that was to draw it was in a siding waiting for a signal from the guard of the train to couple up.

Captain Anstruther climbed on to the foot-plate, much to the surprise of the driver and fireman, who had not heard him coming.

"Good evening, my lads," he said, and he undid his coat and showed them a gold star with "R.N." in the centre. "On the King's Service," he added. He then told the driver exactly what he had told Redburn in the cabin.

"Right, sir," said the grizzled old north-countryman. "I'll do it all right. It won't be my fault if things don't go exactly as you wish."

After a few more words of warning, the captain descended the tender-steps, and once more played hide-and-seek amongst the trucks.

As he did so, a man came up and saluted, and, whispering softly, said:

"They've been followed over the wall, sir, at the end of Andrew Street. All three of 'em are now in the yard. But we can't find out where."

"All right, Roberts," answered Anstruther. "Be handy when you hear my whistle, as any explosives they may have in the train will have pretty short time fuses, and we'll have to risk being blown to smithereens in getting the fuses out. But get them out we *must*."

Roberts faded away in the gloom, and once more Anstruther went on. This time he came out into the glare of the lights where the shunters were getting the waggons sorted.

He came up to one of them, and touched him on the shoulder.

"Just a moment, Alec," he said to young Havers. "That fellow, Gussen, who is lodging at Redburn's is a dangerous spy of the Blue Government."

Young Havers muttered an imprecation.

"If *I* can lay my hands on him, captain, I've more than one score to settle with him."

"All well and good, my lad," said the other, "but the King's business comes first. This train is going to stop at the Bridge cabin, and we're going to search her before she goes on to the bridge itself. Don't notice anything you may see in the yard, but you and your mates ride out on the waggons until she stops. We'll want everybody we can to search the train, as we shall have very little time to do it in. Whether she's ready to go or not, she'll start five minutes before her time. Tell your mates that. I'll tell the guard." And he went off to find that official.

The three spies crept very cautiously from under the truck where they had been concealed, and went forward, carrying their dangerous loads very carefully until they came to the freight train.

Gussen told them to stay where they were, and crept away.

He was absent a few moments, and on coming back he whispered:

"The centre of the train is nearly where we're standing. Get under the truck abreast of us, and hang the gelatine on to the hooks and coupling-chains, but be sure they don't knock up against one another when the train is moving."

They all crept under the truck, and commenced hurriedly fastening on the giant explosives wherever they could.

Gussen looked at his watch.

"Get away at once," he said, "and go out of the country as soon as you can. If you're caught it will be your own fault. I stay here until the work is done."

With a whispered farewell, Brunner and Stedman crept out from under the waggon and disappeared in the misty rain.

Gussen had carefully adjusted one out of the five fuses (the sixth he was keeping for his own personal use), when he heard three short, sharp whistles from the engine, and the train began to move, very nearly taking his head off as he stood between the buffers.

He hurriedly got on to them, and sprang clear of the train.

"My watch is wrong, or else they've started too soon. There's only *one* fuse set. Perdition take them!"

He watched the train go on until the red tail lights were almost lost to view in the mist, when suddenly he heard "bump, bump, bump," repeated as the trucks cannoned one against the other on the brake being applied.

"They've stopped," he muttered. "That one fuse will go off, and the whole thing explode before the train reaches the bridge."

He ran as quickly as he could in the direction of the train, hoping to catch it up and start the others, and, guided by the two red tail lights, came up to it, but his progress was much retarded by the

His assailant dropped his pistol . . . rushed up, and seized the parcel of explosive. Taking it in both hands, he hurl d it over the parapet of the bridge. (Page 175 col 2)

bag containing the last of the gelatine. And he had to carry this very carefully, as the charge was fused.

Just as he came up to the train, he heard a shrill whistle, and to his intense astonishment and dismay saw a number of men come out from all sides and systematically begin searching the train from one end to the other.

A perfect blaze of light illuminated the scene, as the men had prepared two portable searchlights, and their rays swept the train from end to end.

Suddenly from the middle of the train came a shout.

"They have found them," snarled Gussen. "They've found them. If only that one fuse would go off and blow them all to blazes, I'd be happy."

Nothing happened, and Gussen, creeping nearer, saw by the bright rays of the projectors the men carefully remove the blasting gelatine and hand each bomb to a tall man.

"As I live, it's Anstruther!" growled the spy. "I never for one moment thought that *he* was mixed up with this detective work. If I *had* known it I'd have shot him in the hotel to-night as he sat at that table having his supper. Pah, he's only carrying out the orders of the Great Sachem after all. But I'll stay and blow up the accursed bridge with my own hands, and go with it, sooner than it should go uninjured."

He saw Anstruther quickly extract one fuse and examine it, and pass it on to his subordinate; another and another followed until the explosive was rendered harmless.

His hand felt for his Browning pistol, and he was just making up his mind to fire point blank at Anstruther and kill as many of the others as he could, when there was a disturbance on the line farthest from him and he saw his two comrades being dragged up, with handcuffs on their wrists.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed. "The fools have been caught. To think that they *could* have been such idiots."

As he spoke, the train whistled, and jolted off on her interrupted journey over the bridge to the south.

The lights were switched off, and everything again became as dark as pitch except the red lights of the signals and the dim yellow halo from the signal cabin.

He heard scramblings and scufflings as the men retreated in the darkness, but he never moved except to get clear of the rails, and lie down beside his death-dealing package.

After what seemed to him a veritable eternity, he rose stiffly to his feet and looked at his luminous watch. It was nearly 2.30 a.m.

Time to go on, or else the dawn would find him with his task still unaccomplished.

He crept past the lighted signal box and on to the bridge.

Once there, on the path by the side of the rails, he mopped his face, and began to breathe more freely.

He hurried on as quickly as he dared, carefully feeling his way. He was tiring very rapidly now, and his burden was getting very heavy, but the fever of desire to do *some* damage spurred him on.

At length, in the gloom of the mist, he saw that he had arrived at the centre span. He stumbled on for some twenty-five yards further, and then stopped. Opening his bag, he took out the fused bomb of blasting gelatine, set the fuse as near as he could for three minutes, felt about hurriedly for a place to put it, and was just bending down to pick it up, when a stern voice, almost in his ear, said: "Hands up!"

Before he could lift the explosive a shot rang hollowly through the vastness of the bridge, and down he went, shot through the head.

His assailant dropped his pistol, and without stopping to look at the dead man, rushed up, and seized the parcel of explosive. Taking it in both hands, he hurled it over the parapet of the bridge.

After a slight pause a sudden splash greeted his ears, and he knew that the bridge was saved. A sigh of intense relief escaped him.

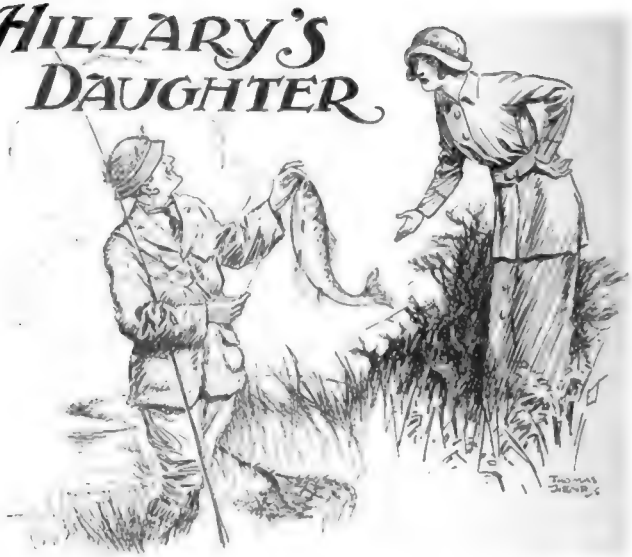
It was Anstruther, who had determined not to leave anything to chance, and felt that Gussen would make a determined effort to blow up the bridge himself, after he had seen the failure of his attempt on the train.

Some of the bridge guards rushed up, attracted by the sound of the pistol shot, and to them Captain Anstruther gave orders for the removal of the body of the Blue Government's agent.

After receiving the report of the officer in charge of the bridge, the captain walked slowly towards the north side.

The mist began to lift, and the feeble light of a grey dawn appeared. In its ghostly light four men were seen walking slowly along the bridge. Their burden was the corpse of a spy.

HILLARY'S DAUGHTER



A Country Comedy.

By J. P. Loughnan.

I.

I admit I had on my oldest clothes; they had been through several shooting seasons, to say nothing of fishing, and their effect must have been distinctly picturesque, although I did not realise that at the time. I had just landed a plump six-pounder when the interruption occurred. A musical voice from behind me made me jump round, and the most beautiful girl in the world stood before me, her cheeks rosy with righteous indignation.

"What are you doing here?" the voice demanded, and because her tones were so sweet, I let her repeat the question before replying.

"I am fishing. Isn't that a lovely trout?"—holding it out for her inspection.

"You have no right to be fishing here. These waters are not preserved for the benefit of trippers from Riddlesbury."

Her wrath was really most becoming, and I looked at her flashing eyes and flushed cheeks in genuine admiration.

"Where is Riddlesbury?" I asked mildly, but the question seemed to incense her more than ever.

"Your impertinence is not funny," she remarked with exquisite dignity, drawing her sweet, slim figure up to its full height and regarding me like a displeased queen. "I shall tell my father about you."

"If you wish me to go, I will do so. I will do anything to please you," I told her. But it seemed that whatever I said only served to make her more angry, for she merely threw up her head and turned from me with a shrug of annoyance.

I collapsed on the grass, and watched her moving off through the long ferns with a feeling of sincere regret at her departure. It would have delighted me to stand there and

be rated by her all day, for she was the most charming girl I had ever met, with her pink and white skin and her angry blue eyes blazing out at me from their long, dark lashes.

I was still sitting on the river bank in a state of mild collapse, thinking of the exquisite vision that had now vanished, when there was a movement in the bracken beside me, and a little black spaniel came nosing up to me as though we had known one another for years. I began to pat his handsome little head absent-mindedly, when a shrill whistle from the heart of the bushes ahead of me made him turn half round, and, looking down at his collar, I read these words: *Miss Hillary, The Hall, West Lorton.*

The intelligent little beast listened to his mistress' whistle, with ears cocked, for about two seconds; then, deliberately turning his back on the bushes, he drove his muzzle into the depths of my Norfolk jacket, as much as to say:

"No, I am *not* coming yet, Miss Hillary!"

There was a short silence, and then a girl's voice reached our ears.

"Busy! Busy!! Busy!!!" it called. "Come here, you naughty dog!"

But Busy never paid the slightest attention, continuing instead his exploration of my hip-pockets.

The sound of a light step in the bushes now became audible, and, judging that the time for action had arrived, I rose to my feet and began hastily winding up my reel. I had just begun to take my rod to pieces when she appeared again. My back was half turned towards her, but I could see her out of the tail of my eye. Busy, meanwhile, was still devoting his entire attention to me.

"Busy! Come here!!" she exclaimed, with an impatient stamp of her small foot, and at her words I swung round with as much apparent surprise as I could muster.

"Is this your dog?" I asked.

"Busy! Come here!!" she said, keeping her eyes fixed diligently on the wilful spaniel.

"Busy! Go to your mistress!" I commanded. But he only wagged his tail at me, and, when I made a dive at him, jumped aside, with a delighted bark.

"I'll go away, and perhaps he'll follow you," I remarked, and raising my hat, I began to walk off along the bank.

She again ignored me, and I strolled away, feeling rather hurt at her coldness. I tried to assume an air of offended dignity, and kept my eyes fixed on a distant oak-tree as I walked. But I was presently recalled to my more immediate surroundings by a light touch on the leg, which made me look down.

That abominable little dog was still following me.

I stood still and regarded him with a mixture of gratitude and amusement. Why was he following me like this? There must be some explanation; and then the truth suddenly flashed upon me, and, chuckling to myself, I turned back and began to retrace my steps.

I found her where I had left her, but by this time I could see that she was more angry than ever. She looked simply splendid, standing there in the sunshine, but she would keep looking at Busy instead of at me.

"Have you a lead to put him on?" I asked her.

She flashed me an almost bloodthirsty glance, and, compressing her lips, shook her head. I dived at the dog and missed him; she tried to grab his collar as he skipped past her, but her effort was as unsuccessful as mine had been. We stood looking at each other in silence.

"Do you know why he is following me?" I asked.

"Don't be ridiculous!" she snapped.

"Because," I went on, ignoring the interruption, "if you don't know, I will tell you. This shooting-coat of mine has inside pockets over the hips, and at one time or another I have carried numerous partridges and rabbits in these pockets. Your dog has got hold of the 'gamey' scent of my coat, and that is why he wants to come with me. If you would not mind carrying my coat home with you, there would be no difficulty about getting the dog to follow you. And it would also serve as a clue, in case you want to prosecute me for poaching," I added innocently, as I started slowly to peel off the offending garment.

She was biting her lips now, and I could see that it was all she could do to keep from laughing, but she was determined not to let me know that, and when I held out the coat to her her face was like a mask. For a moment she hesitated, but Busy showed such obvious interest in the "Norfolk" that at last she took it from me, an expression of some embarrassment in her beautiful eyes.

"My address——" she began.

"I saw it on his collar," I told her. "That will be all right. Good-bye!"

She bowed, without speaking, and disappeared, with my coat over her arm and the dog close at her heels, while I stood gazing after her like a moonstruck idiot. Then I turned and walked back to the old farmhouse where I was staying.

II.

She was talking to someone at the other side of the room when I entered, but I spotted her at once, before Sir John led me over to introduce me to her.

"I think you two have already met," he observed with a chuckle. "This is Mr. Marten, Millie, the gentleman whose coat you brought back with you the other day."

Sir John Hillary began talking to the man beside her, as his daughter bowed to me. Her manner was not promising, and when I spoke she flushed slightly.

"How is Busy?" I asked, with as much solemnity as I could command.

"I think you're perfectly horrid!" was her reply. "Why didn't you tell me that father had let the fishing to you for this month?"

I considered the matter.

"You might not have believed me," I said. "You were not very friendly, you know, and you rather frightened me by your ferocious appearance. But tell me, how is Busy?"

"It seems to amuse you to make fun of me," she retorted, still ignoring my question. "I'm very glad you are not going to take me in to dinner, and I think you're a cynical, unkind wretch!"

"Oh, come!" I began. But at that very instant a gong rang out in the hall, and I was hustled off to take an uninteresting girl to the dining-room. Nor did I get another chance of speaking to Miss Hillary that night, except within earshot of several other people, and the things I wanted to tell her were not for other people's ears.

I returned to my farmhouse in deep dejection, and was up early next morning, but left my rod at home. I felt a sudden desire to explore the surrounding country, and—well, I was sure Miss Hillary would avoid the river in future.

I walked miles that morning without seeing anything that interested me; and in the afternoon I set out on another exploring expedition. But the chances of meeting her were all against me, I knew. It was just a matter of luck, and the luck did not turn until 3 p.m.

I was walking along a narrow path that wound through a "hummocky" field—an ideal snipe-ground, I reflected—when from a small belt o' bushes ahead I saw a lithe, black body appear, and next moment Busy was trotting fussily round me.

I had almost reached the bushes before she saw me, and then she could not very well retreat, but she gave me such a cold look that I did not feel brave enough to speak to her. She simply froze me up, and I stepped off the path to make room for her.

I thought I had stepped on to a patch of nice green turf, but that was a slight mistake on my part, and, before I could say a word, I found myself up to the armpits in as moist a bit of bog as I had ever struck this side of Donegal. A clump of bog-myrtle afforded me an insecure finger-hold, otherwise I should have disappeared for ever, and this chronicle would never have been written.

Clinging to the bog-myrtle with both hands, I looked up into the now anxious face of Miss Hillary, while Busy planted a complimentary caress on the tip of my nose with a pink tongue. The situation was interesting, if undignified, as far as I was concerned, but apparent misfortune may often be twisted to our advantage, and I saw the chance of a lifetime opening out before me.

"Let me pull you out," exclaimed Miss Hillary, bending towards me and extending a graceful hand in my direction.

I took her hand and gazed up into her eyes, while she began to pull at my arm with great vigour. In the end she was constrained to use both hands, which was much pleasanter for me, although her mightiest efforts failed to raise me by one hair's breadth from my position.

"Oh, dear, what can I do?" she exclaimed at last, crimson in the face, and with eyes rounded in anxiety.

"I think you had better leave me to my fate," I told her. "I am quite content to die here, because, in a way, I shall be dying for you, and that will make me quite happy."

"Don't be so silly," she said.

"But it's not silly," I remonstrated. "It was in making room for you to pass that I stepped off the path into this slough of despond, and that thought will comfort me as I sink."

Here I gave a slight gasp, as though the end were approaching, and with a little exclamation of anxiety she began to drag at my hand again.

"Why are you so unkind to me?" I asked, when she paused to take her next rest.

"I'm not unkind I'm trying to save you, but you're so abominably heavy."

"I don't want to be saved, unless you will be kind to me when I reach dry land again. I refuse to go on living if you continue to snub me. The task is impossible; good-bye!": And I made a slight struggle, as though about to disappear.

"Oh, please, do be sensible, and tell me how to help you!" she entreated, her eyes becoming suspiciously shiny.

I shrugged what remained of my shoulders.

"If I ever reach dry land again," said I earnestly, "will you promise not to avoid me in future? Will you promise not to look through me with that glassy stare which frightens me into the nearest bog? Will you, in a word, be friends with me?"

She looked down, half laughing, half crying, in her anxiety on my behalf.

"Ye-es," she said slowly, "I promise to be—er—friends."

"Good! That's a bargain," I exclaimed, and, dropping her hand reluctantly, I placed my elbows on the ground at her feet, and proceeded to draw myself slowly out of the detaining slime. But when, a discoloured and dripping scarecrow, I stood beside her again, it overwhelmed me to find that she was looking more fiercely indignant than ever.

"Why, what's the matter?" I gasped.

"You have been making fun of me again!" she declared, with a stamp of her little foot. "You could easily have got out of that hole before if you'd chosen. Now, couldn't you?"

"It's possible," I admitted, "but I could not very well refuse your offer of assistance, could I?"

"I think you are perfectly hateful!" exclaimed Miss Hillary. "I think you are the most hateful man I ever met!"

"But you just promised to be friends with me," I pleaded.

I took her hand and gazed up into her eyes, while she began to pull at my arm with great vigour. In the end she was constrained to use both hands.

"You only got that promise by shamming," she retorted with withering emphasis. "I—I thought you were in danger, but you were being deceitful, and—and I *won't* be friends with you!"

I looked at her in speechless misery, but she turned away without deigning to bestow another glance on me, and walked off. Busy followed, leaving me helpless, because, you see, I had not got on my "gamey" Norfolk that afternoon.

The Fates certainly seemed very much against my acquaintance with Miss Hillary ripening into friendship, I reflected, as, with clinging garments, I splashed my muddy way homeward. Instead of raising myself in her esteem I had only given her fresh cause for offence.

Then I pulled her out of the sea, and the incident was complete.

III.

His name was Maurice, and his fishing adjoined Sir John's. I made his acquaintance one afternoon while he was pulling them in as fast as he could cast fly to the stream, although not a fin could be seen in the Hillary waters that day. We pulled up from the first, and that was how he came to ask me whether I'd join his expedition to Seaham Rocks. I said "yes" before I realised it was going to be a four-handed party, and when I found myself in the back seat of his car, with a Miss Dartry beside me and Miss Hillary with Maurice in front, I rather wished I hadn't come.

During that run to the coast I watched the pair in front of us with jealous eyes, while the horrible truth that Maurice was in love with my goddess filtered slowly through what passes for my brain.

Who shall describe the exquisite misery of what ensued?

We abandoned the motor and betook ourselves to the slippery rocks that run out into the waves from Seaham beach. We stuck white feathers on to large hooks, and showed the girls how to draw this bait along the top of the waves, in the hope of catching some ridiculous fish, the name of which I do not care to recall. For, look you, Miss Hillary's hook was baited by Maurice; Miss Hillary's dainty hand was guided by Maurice; Miss Hillary's slim form was supported by Maurice as they moved from rock to rock.

But I, miserable and unlucky wretch, was left with that tedious Miss Dartry, whose hook, whose hand, whose personality were less than nothing at all to me, when set in the balance against the lightest of Miss Hillary's smiles!

True, there were moments that relieved the drab tragedy of that fateful sea-fishing expedition, although I could not appreciate their humour just then. Once, for instance, Miss Dartry, as the result of a particularly energetic cast, succeeded in fixing her hook securely in the nether garments of Maurice. Then, while the two girls sat by, helpless from laughter, I had to disengage the hook from its resting-place. Of course this incident gave Maurice an excuse for getting away from us with Miss Hillary.

The fact that I afterwards slipped on a piece of green seaweed and was precipitated into a greener pool, lying in a chasm between rocks did not strike me as amusing. But Miss Dartry, who had to help me out of the chasm, appeared to find it so. Our relations became rather strained as a result, and we began to climb painfully over the rocks in the direction of Miss Hillary and her companion.

We proceeded on the Alpine principle—that is to say, I went first, grasping one end of the fishing-rod, and Miss Dartry followed, clutching feverishly at the other end. Sometimes I slipped unintentionally down the side of a particularly slippery rock, and only Miss Dartry was visible, grasping her end of the rod; at other times she made an involuntary plunge, and I guided her ascent by judicious manipulation of the bamboo. Once we both went down at the same time, and that is how we smashed the rod in half. But at last we drew near to our friends.

I was balancing uncertainly on the edge

of a miniature weed-crowned precipice when Miss Hillary's voice rang out ahead.

"There's a big fish on! There's a big fish on!" she cried, and I saw her bend forward eagerly, while her rod curved suggestively through the air. Next moment, with a sharp cry, she disappeared from her perch on the rocks, and a loud splash told me she had fallen into the sea.

Well, of course, Maurice had the bulge on me; he was right on the spot, and I saw him slither out of sight just as I jumped forward, hoping to be useful. It struck me as a curious way of entering the water, but I did not grasp the truth until I got up to the place where they had been.

There they were, both in the sea, sure enough, but you mustn't think that Maurice was rescuing Miss Hillary, because he wasn't doing anything of the kind. The silly beggar had been consumed with a desire to help his companion, but the unfortunate thing, from his point of view, was that he couldn't swim, and, by the time I got into the water, she was trying to rescue him.

Of course she wasn't strong enough to do that on her own, but between us we did eventually manage to drag him on to a ledge of rock, where he lay gasping. Then I pulled her out of the sea, and the incident was complete, but Maurice looked rather sheepish when he came round, and it was I who continued Miss Hillary's fishing education after that.

"We should both have been drowned if you hadn't been here to-day," said Miss Hillary, as we sat on the rocks a little apart from the other two.

"It was plucky of him to go in," I ventured.

"He would have done much more good by staying where he was," she replied crossly.

"Well, I hope you will both be very happy together," I said, looking out to sea.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

Her tone made me look round, and our eyes met.

"If you did not love him——" I began.

"I don't," she murmured, getting very red.

"Then will you sit with me in the back of the car going home?" I asked gently.

And, although she did not answer in so many words, I knew that the luck had really turned at last; and so it had!

SYSTEM.

There wasn't a girl in the whole of our town
Like beautiful Bessie Badalia Brown;
The boys all adored her, 'twas easy to see,
And yet there was none who adored her
like me.

I fed her on pastry, and fruit, and ice cream,
I'd hire her a boat, and we'd float down the
stream;
The others would take her to lunch or to tea,
But ah! there was none who could treat her
like me.

Joe offered to buy her a motor, and Jack
A necklace, and Billy a thoroughbred hack;
But "Darling," I said, "I will give you all
three!"
So we're married, for none understood her
like me.

F. E. B.

SHALL WE KEEP CHRISTMAS?

A Symposium of Representative Opinions.

WITH Christmas Day within little more than a month of us, the question as to how it is to be celebrated, or if it shall be celebrated at all, is one of wide interest. With England in the throes of war and our brave men fighting in the trenches, the usual gay and festive celebrations are impossible. But to let Christmas pass unheeded—surely that is equally so? To settle this momentous question we have invited the aid of famous people, whose suggestions cannot fail to be both helpful and enlightening.

Photo Ernest Mills.
Mr. Gordon Selfridge, head of the great firm of Selfridge & Co.

Mr. Gordon Selfridge, head of the great Oxford Street firm of that name, has won such distinction in the world of commerce that his opinion is entitled to respect, as voicing the feelings of business men on this important matter. Those who cling to the old customs, and to whom a Christmas uncelebrated would appear a tragedy indeed, will go their ways rejoicing over his views on the question, and may celebrate Christmas happy in the knowledge that their decision to do so is endorsed by so astute a business-man as Mr. Selfridge. He says:

"Of course Christmas must be kept, war or no war.

"While quite possibly the charming and mirthful festivities which are so prevalent at that time of the year will be very much curtailed, the giving of presents is a delightful custom which cannot be eclipsed, even by this terrible war."

H. Gordon Selfridge

Photo Bassano.
Miss Phyllis Bedells, *première danseuse* at the Empire Theatre.

Miss Phyllis Bedells, the beautiful young English dancer who occupies the proud position of *première danseuse* at the Empire Theatre, is one of those whose Christmas will be an anxious one, since she has an only brother in a submarine in the North Sea. Nevertheless, Miss Bedells, who danced so bewitchingly in *Europe*, puts a gallant face on it and advocates the keeping of Christmas, if only for the sake of those who need help and sympathy so greatly.

"Yes, by all means," she writes, "let us keep Christmas! 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men' was never more needed than it will be this Christmas. Even if our dearest cannot be with us, there will be plenty of others to help and cheer. Besides, if every home prepared for Christmas joys as usual, perhaps longing to be there to share them would help to end this great trouble."

Phyllis Bedells

No one is in closer touch with the feelings and wishes of the people than the popular member for Woolwich, Mr. Will Crooks, and no one has their interests more at heart. It is only natural that Mr. Crooks, big-hearted and genial as he is, should consider the question from the point of view of the wives and children of the brave men who are fighting so gallantly on our behalf.

If everyone took Mr. Crooks' advice to heart and made it their business to bring happiness and good cheer to those who are face to face with anxiety and suffering, this would be a Christmas indeed.

"Keep Christmas?" he says. "Why, certainly! What do you think our brave fellows are fighting for? Homes! Our men would be pretty sad if

they thought we were not doing our share to make the lives of their children and wives as happy as we possibly can at Christmas."

Will Crooks

Photo: J. Russell & Sons.
Mr. Will Crooks, the popular Labour member.

Mr. Keble Howard is the author of numerous books and plays, and a contributor to this number of the ROYAL. Those who have chuckled over "The Smiths of Surbiton," or who cherish gleeful memories of a visit to "Compromising Martha," when it was running at the Haymarket Theatre, will be interested to hear how Mr. Keble Howard thinks this memorable Christmas should be spent. This is what he says:

Photo: Ernest Mills.
Mr. Keble Howard, the well-known author and playwright.

"Yes, we must keep Christmas this year, and we must keep it better than it has ever been kept. We must cut out the gluttony, and the rapacity, and the snobbishness, and we must intensify the real spirit of Christmas. It must be a Christmas of real good-will towards all men—save the King's enemies. And then, for many and many a Christmas after that, we shall enjoy peace on earth."

Keble Howard.

Mr. Burbidge, the leading spirit of the great firm of Harrod's, Ltd., takes a very optimistic view of the matter, and all who revel in the joy of present-giving will hail his words with delight, since they imply that there will be no lack of novelties from which to make their choice. Mr. Burbridge writes as follows:

"In reply to your letter asking for my opinion as to whether we shall keep Christmas in spite of the war, I have no doubt that it will be observed more earnestly than ever. All will feel it their duty to see that the festival so closely associated with children and with the poor shall in no way be disturbed by the war, and there will be a great national feeling of gratitude and pride that the British race has once again risen to the fullest realisation of its history and birthright.

"So far as trade is concerned the fact that the majority of goods provided for the festival will be of British manufacture must add, under present conditions, to their attractiveness to the public.

"At Harrods' we are making our preparations for the festival without restriction, and I shall be greatly disappointed if our results do not completely justify our optimism in this respect."

R. Burbidge

The opinion of the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Charles Johnston, is probably shared by many Englishmen at this time. Here is his reply to our question:

"People have so many different ideas of 'the keeping' of Christmas that it is hardly possible to dogmatise about it. But the coming Christmas will be unlike all that we have been accustomed to, for it will find us in the midst of a cruel and terrible war, in which both here and on the Continent sorrow, desolation, and bereavement have been the lot of high and low, and care and anxiety have cast a blight and a shadow over the world.

"At such a time merriment and frivolity would seem entirely out of place. 'A Merry Christmas' when our soldiers and sailors and those of our Allies are fighting and dying for our honour and protection is a phrase, the use of which we must temporarily suspend.

Photo: Elliott & Fry Ltd.
Sir Charles Johnston, Lord Mayor of London.

"But we can devote the Christmas of 1914—the year of the great war—to works of charity and mercy and pity in behalf of those who are in danger, necessity, and tribulation, and we can so attune our lives to the altered state of affairs that, both as nations and individuals, we may emerge the stronger and the better for the fiery ordeal through which we are passing.

Chas. Johnston

LADY HILDA MAKES HER FAREWELL APPEARANCE.

With The HONOURS OF WAR

By F. E. Baily.

Those who have found Lady Hilda charming in her reckless and capricious moments will find her even more appealing when in chastened mood she surrenders to the man who has been her faithful knight-errant for so long.

I.

"I am called Marcellus," said the Stranger.

He sat, a majestic anachronism, in Hilda Glaive's Sloane Street drawing-room. Hilda Glaive—once Lady Hilda Risborough, and at present the finest dancer on the English stage—gazed at the classic figure, clad in spotless white toga and shod with sandals, in something very like awe. The man's superb physique, his heroic countenance, its perfectly chiselled features of almost Greek purity, yet redeemed from effeminacy by a savour of Roman strength, his clear, bright eyes, and, above all, his wonderful voice, fascinated. Otherwise she might have distrusted his mouth.

"My friend, Cynthia Stockdale, told me about you," she explained almost reverently. "She spoke of some wonderful new religion."

Marcellus, the extraordinary personality who had appeared in London no one knew whence, smiled on her his peculiarly winning smile, admiring in his heart of hearts her beauty and charm, and then let his gaze rest on the untasted tea she had poured out for him.

"I seek to lead people towards all that is beautiful in life. Where there is beauty there can be neither sorrow nor sin. Lady Cynthia is a very earnest disciple. If I can help you, her friend, I shall be exceedingly happy."

Hilda, her dark beauty draped in a perfect gown of soft purple, merged quietly into the harmony of her blue, white, and purple drawing-room, and considered Marcellus with calm and dispassionate grey eyes. Rudolf Merion, the war-correspondent, loved her; he was a better man, probably, than this golden-voiced prophet. Yet she feared to link her life with Rudolf's, her only real friend's.

"Every religion has its paradise and its hell," flowed on the wonderful voice of the Stranger, "and in the same way each of us may surround himself with hell or heaven. Personal beauty more especially is something after which we ought to strive. For example, you are a beautiful woman"—there was not a trace of offence in his manner—"and your beauty is a sacred trust."

Marcellus continued to develop his ideas.

"Perhaps you will be so gracious as to assist at the worship of beauty in our particular shrine," he concluded, rising at length, still with his air of supreme detachment from his surroundings. "I have

managed to find a very adequate temple, so to speak. And I hope to persuade you some day to dance for us—some of those incomparable dances of the East that are beauty itself."

He bowed, with that wonderful, illuminating smile, and left. In the hall he passed Rudolf Merion, just arrived.

"Obviously the adventurous or military type!" said Marcellus to himself. "How they lack subtlety, and how easy it is to outstrip them where women are concerned!"

"Who's the cinema gentleman?" asked Rudolf, a moment later, resting a hand lightly—half in greeting, half caressingly—on Hilda's shoulder, as she leant back in the corner of a Chesterfield.

Claiming, for once, the privilege of an old friend, he had arrived straight from his work, seeking the companionship of the woman he loved and a cup of tea, without waiting to change. All day long he had ridden over the heather-clad commons around Aldershot watching cavalry and artillery at exercise.

Tall, sinewy, and hard as nails, his lean, good-looking face bronzed by the open air, he contrasted sharply, in drab, waterproof Norfolk jacket and breeches, gaiters, boots, and spurs, his field-glasses slung across his shoulder, and the dust of Aldershot flecking him here and there, with the spotless white figure of Marcellus.

Hilda realised all this in a flash. Her candid judgment awarded the palm of manhood to Rudolf, but her restless mind, seeking to excuse itself for refusing to marry him, tried hard to exalt Marcellus, who had spoken so comfortably of beauty in all things. Was there anything beautiful about this dusty horseman?

"Hullo!" she said, almost off-handedly. "Sit down, like a good man, and ring for more tea, will you? Don't mind if I'm cross—I'm as tired as a dog."

"Hard luck!" he replied, sinking obediently into a chair opposite her. "I'm tired, too, but it's a good tired. Been galloping about over furze bushes all day! Gad! the 1st Brigade has come on!"

Hilda frowned a little.

"How strange the enthusiasm of men for organised murder seems to a woman!" she murmured.

Rudolf glanced up quickly.

"Well, it makes men men instead of people like your cinema gentleman."

"If you mean the man who's just gone out," she retorted almost angrily, "he's nothing to do with the cinema, but a very wonderful person, a sort of apostle of a new religion. And I'm going to sit at his feet and be made a little peaceful, because I'm such a *blast*, discontented, dissatisfied beast."

"Poor Hilda!" That curious tenderness of a strong man for a tired woman made the words an ineffable caress. They brought a little, appeased smile into her eyes, and contrition to her heart.

"Just a moment!"

He passed out into the hall with the long stride of a cavalryman, and returned carrying an armful of great velvety roses, and placed them in her lap.

"A peace-offering from a grubby caller!" he said lightly. "I didn't bring them in before in case someone might be here."

She buried her face in the flowers, and looked her thanks because something bulky seemed to have come into her throat. Rudolf drank tea with genuine thirst.

"And what's the new religion?" he inquired after a pause, with overdone casualness. "Men admitted, or women only?"

"I don't know what it's called. Cynthia Stockdale told me about it. Moseley-Thompson, the writer-man, is a prominent disciple."

"Ah!" said Rudolf thoughtfully, getting up, his face perfectly expressionless, "that's rather interesting. I believe I once met Thompson somewhere. I must go now. My father's very ill, and I expect there'll be news waiting for me at home."

"Oh, Rudolf, I *am* sorry!" she exclaimed, and the sympathy in her voice brought back the tenderness he was always striving to keep out of his eyes.

II.

Within the adequate Temple of Beauty they waited for Hilda to dance.

The seed sown by Marcellus that afternoon at her flat, rooted itself in her heart. The stage and society wearied her; Rudolf she could not bring herself to marry. Here was a promise of peace, at a time when peace seemed very precious. She became an enthusiastic follower of the Stranger's teaching. And he on his side had come to live only for those occasions when she listened, in rapt attention, to his teaching, an unfathomable expression in her great grey eyes.

Rudolf Merion, strangely enough, despite his apparent contempt for the "cinema gentleman," took, unknown to Hilda, an early opportunity of seeking him out, aided by the earnest devotee, Moseley-Thompson.

Marcellus, clever to detect guile, particularly among men, could find no fault, and accepted the new convert. Rudolf used to haunt the Temple regularly whenever he could discover Hilda would be there. He distrusted freak-religion mongers as a race. Hilda, in the gloom of the Temple, always dimly illuminated, never noticed him, since he was the last man she expected to see.

A lofty, pillared hall, with a dais at one end, comprised this Temple. Beautiful reproductions of statuary decorated it; the walls were hung with deep purple velvet, and the disciples sat here and there at haphazard, on couches, in the old Roman fashion. On the marble floor of the dais, whither two wide steps led, Marcellus discoursed to his followers. Roman lamps, attached to the pillars, diffused a dim light.

"What a weird crib!" said Rudolf to himself on first beholding it and the sparse band of society women and harmless cranks who occupied the couches. He did not exaggerate.

To-night the dais stretched empty, save for Hilda. In four braziers, one at each corner, smouldered some smoky, aromatic spice, and at the foot of the steps, to one side, a hand extended upward against the wall, stood Marcellus. From somewhere in the gloom came the thin melody of a flute, and Hilda, dressed in the gauze chiton and tunic of a Greek dancer, her arms and legs bare, and her long, dark hair restrained only by a golden fillet, floated through a series of simple, pastoral dances full of tender appeal, and artless imagery.

The little gathering of enthusiasts applauded; Marcellus murmured gentle words of praise, and Hilda slipped away into a little room giving upon the dais, having a curtain across the doorway.

While she changed, the golden-voiced teacher exhorted his followers. Rudolf, out of sight in the vague and remote shadows, scarcely heard the discourse. To him something foreboded evil: he smelt harm that would come to Hilda, and could not guess whence.

Slowly she returned through the curtained doorway; she had lengthened her eyes and darkened her skin. Her costume was that of Salome dancing before Herod; barbaric jewellery clashed and jangled on her limbs.

Marcellus directed at her a long, steady gaze. Then he flung a handful of exotic incense into each of the braziers. A thick smoke, with an overpowering, cloying perfume, rose on the air, and the sound of smitten gongs.

Hilda's lithe and beautiful body began to sway in the undulations of an Eastern dance.

Faster and faster came the reverberations of the gongs; faster and faster gyrated the dancer. Then the barbaric music slackened; the sweet smoke from the braziers seemed to blend with the movements of the girl who danced, till all was mystery. Still Marcellus directed that level gaze at her. At last she seemed to clutch at her throat, move towards him, and then subside on the marble floor of the dais.

Marcellus turned on the occupants of the couches his serene, undisturbed countenance.

"To-night," he said, "you have beheld a spectacle of exceeding beauty. Go, and let the memory of it refresh you and make your lives fragrant."

He stretched out his arms in a gesture of dismissal. Awed and submissive, the watchers melted slowly away. Rudolf, unobserved in the shadows, watched them go.

The last disciple closed the outer door of the Temple of Beauty. Marcellus quenched the four braziers. Then he came to where Hilda had staggered to her feet, and now stood swaying a little, and passing a vague hand over her brow.

Marcellus gazed at her, his face pale with emotion. The philosopher was gone, and only the man remained, forgetful of everything but a woman's beauty.

"You are lovelier than Aphrodite herself!" he exclaimed. "Lady Hilda, listen to me! I love you, I love you—what is all the religion and the so-called philosophy of a crazy world compared with the mystery of your hair and the wonder of your face!"

He took a step towards her. She stretched out protesting hands to ward off his advance, but he clasped them in his.

"See, I will kiss you——" he began.

"I beg your pardon," said Rudolf with bitter politeness, stepping out into the light cast by the Roman lamps. "You will do nothing of the sort!"

Marcellus led Hilda gently to one of the couches. Then he turned and faced Rudolf.

"What are you doing here?" he inquired coldly. "You should have left with the others!"

A great rage seized Rudolf.

"You dog!" he snarled. "I don't propose to argue with you. You've insulted Lady Hilda, and that's quite enough. I'm going to lam the life out of you!"

"See, I will kiss you—" he began. "I beg your pardon," said Rudolf with bitter politeness, stepping out into the light cast by the Roman lamps. "You will do nothing of the sort!"

The Stranger's pallor increased a little. Rudolf feinted at his body, discovered he was no boxer, and got in a straight left on his mouth. The pain swept all the spectacular calm from Marcellus; his face worked with fury, and he made a savage rush at his assailant.

Rudolf Merion, watching his opportunity, landed a right upper cut on the point of the man's chin, with every ounce of weight behind it. The strangely garbed body collapsed in a heap. It was a superb knock-out.

Rudolf glanced round. For the first time in her life Hilda had fainted. There was a little ornamental fountain below the steps of the dais. He drew Hilda's couch nearer, and dashed water on her face. After an anxious few moments she revived.

"Where am I? What happened? The incense—that——"

She shuddered against Rudolf's shoulder as she caught sight of the Stranger's prostrate form. Tenderly her faithful lover helped her into the little room where she had changed.

Then, while she dressed, he soused Marcellus until he opened his eyes.

"You'd better make yourself scarce after this!" gritted Rudolf between his teeth. "I shall take care that your precious congregation know about it. You'd do well to clear out of London, I think. It won't be healthy for you to remain."

Half-an-hour later he was saying good-night to Hilda in her own drawing-room.

"You've been very kind," she murmured. "The smell of that incense, and his staring eyes seemed to take all the starch out of me. You're a good friend, Rudolf—you always turn up at a crisis."

Then the pallor of his face and the dark shadows beneath his eyes filled her with alarm, and she broke into low, incoherent protestations of sympathy.

He smiled a little wearily.

"I had bad news of my father before turning up at that place to-night. He died quite suddenly this afternoon. I'm going down there—it's at Yeo, in Devon, you know—to-morrow morning. My father"—his voice faltered a little—"my father was quite alone in the world except for me. There will be no one but servants in the house. I wonder if you'd come, too, for the sake of old times? I've a dismal job in front of me, and I feel rather a lonely devil to night."

The great grey eyes softened with pity. Even in the midst of his grief he had not forgotten her. She wondered why the knowledge made her so glad.

"Poor Rudolf!" she said very gently. "Please believe I'm dreadfully sorry. And I should like to go with you very much; and thank you for asking me."

III.

The majestic pageant of most eloquent, just, and mighty Death was over. With fitting ceremony they had laid Sir Godfrey Merion, of the County of Devon, baronet, to rest under the shadow of the church where his ancestors, the Crusaders, slept their eternal sleep, and Sir Rudolf Merion, his son, filled his place.

On a great headland that fronted the broad Atlantic sat Hilda and Rudolf. Behind them Rudolf's wide acres sloped back many a mile until they reached the fine old house with its oak panelling, cool, low-ceilinged, stone-paved kitchens, and wonderful sun-washed gardens where golden fruit ripened on walls mellowed by the fingers of Time, and velvet lawns stretched beneath the shadow of immemorial cedar and yew.

Rudolf knocked out his pipe with slow deliberation. Then he turned towards her.

"Hilda, dear," he said, "will you marry me? You see, I've come to a point in life when a man must choose his road, and it rather rests with you which road I choose. Here's all this"—he waved a hand to the manor and its spreading lands—"waiting for me—and you, if you will. On the other hand, there's the whole world not wide enough to make life worth living, if you won't. But you must decide entirely from your own point of view. I want you to do that."

She did not look at him. Her wistful, misty grey eyes stared out at the blue, sunlit waves that danced illimitably between her and the far horizon.

Out there in the green and sunlight of summer she weighed up the for and against, and was afraid. Slowly she looked at him with wet eyes, and very faintly shook her head. She could not trust her voice just then.

For a moment his hand closed over hers. Then he smiled into the face of misfortune, and stood up, game to the end.

"You're a good pal to give a quick, straight answer. Come up and have tea (she was staying in the village) and wish me good luck. I'm sailing to-morrow, for the East. It was quite safe to book berths, you see. If you'd said yes it would have meant a quiet wedding—I'd got the licence—and a honeymoon trip. As it is——"

He stopped abruptly, and they turned away from the sea.

"I'm catching the midnight from Exeter," he said later. "The boat sails at four to-morrow afternoon, and I've one or two things to do in town."

After tea she said good-bye, and wished him good luck.

IV.

Amid the old-fashioned garden of the village inn Hilda paced up and down, hands clasped behind her back, endeavouring to seek peace and ensue it. By and by they announced dinner, and she went indoors to eat absent-mindedly. There was no escape from her reflections; mentally she re-enacted the events of the afternoon, and every now and then her errant thoughts followed Rudolf on his dilatory train-journey to Exeter and the midnight express.

Too restless to remain in one place, she strolled out to the garage, and ordered her car. She would calm her fretting spirit with a drive in the dark, and wishing to be independent of roadside vendors, piled cans of petrol into the rear compartment, and provided herself with sandwiches, and a vacuum-flask of hot coffee. Then she climbed to her bedroom, to put on a tweed coat and skirt and driving-coat.

She closed the door, and glanced round the simple little room.

Her toilet necessaries lay scattered on the dressing-table; an open trunk gaped at the foot of the bed; feminine odds and ends lay here and there in confusion; last, her eye lit upon a strange and unfamiliar object—a man's waterproof coat.

In a flash her mind darted back to a torrential rainstorm three days ago, when Rudolf had lent her the coat for her journey back to the inn. Slowly she crossed the room, and picked it up.

Her fingers wandered over the well-worn garment. She ought to have returned it, but after all he would never want it now. From a pocket she turned out a pipe—evidently an old favourite—a couple of cartridges, and a note in her own handwriting

"May I come to tea at four o'clock?" it ran. "Please meet me at the gate of the cliff-path. I'm very dull, and I want to be amused."

Salt and burning, the unfamiliar tears rushed into Hilda's eyes. She might be duller than the dullest now, and no help for it. Him who had never refused her least request she had sent away for ever, because—she was afraid. And now she realised what she had done.

She sat down by the window, and the tears trickled unchecked down her face, and splashed into her lap. What did it matter? She had a whole lifetime to cry in. Too late she realised that she loved this man, passionately, hopelessly, and had driven him out of her life. To-morrow he would sail—alone. There was no help. Nothing availed.

Nothing? A faint gleam of hope flickered in her breast. She glanced at her wrist-watch. The hands pointed to 9.45—and his train went at midnight; the car stood waiting in the stable-yard, and Exeter lay forty miles away in the darkness.

Hilda hurled herself down the stairs, pulling on her gloves and buttoning her long coat. She darted out of the inn, every pulse leaping with eagerness, and ran for the car. The inn-keeper's chauffeur was in the act of screwing down the radiator-cap.

"I've filled her up with water and petrol, miss," he said. "Your spare cans are in the back. She's running a treat, miss."

Hilda nodded, and clambered into the driving-seat.

"I'm going up to town," she flung at him over her shoulder. "Tell the landlord not to expect me till to-morrow. Good-night!"

She switched on the lights, and pushed down the self-starter. The engine fired, and broke into a low, caressing purr; Hilda swung out of the gate, and turned the car's bonnet towards Exeter.

Forty miles, and two hours to do it in! The car could touch fifty-five miles an hour easily with one up, but Hilda had darkness, an unknown road, and long hills against her.

For eight torturing miles she twisted and doubled on the third-rate by-road between her and Kingsbridge. Then she let out the car, and tore over the twelve miles of practically straight road to Totnes, gulping every now and then as imaginary obstacles loomed out from the shadows, steering desperately by the road edge, terrified by the speed at which she hurtled into the blackness ahead, and holding on with grim determination.

During the eight mile stretch from Totnes to Newton Abbot she had the race in hand; there remained nearly an hour for the last lap, Newton Abbot to Exeter.

Fearing lest victory might yet be snatched from her, she opened the throttle a few more

notches, and settled down for one last terrific blind to the goal of her desire, and thereby met defeat, most cruel seeing that it came with success in sight. Suddenly the road bent sharply to the right; out came the clutch, on went the brakes, and Hilda wrenched desperately at the steering-wheel. By a miracle the car skidded round in safety, but a coincident patch of sharp stones exacted the toll of a burst near back tyre.

Hilda slowed to a stand-still with one heart-broken sob. Of course, there was a spare wheel—there were two spare wheels—but her unaccustomed hands could never fit one in time.

She stood staring at the damage in hopeless anguish, cursing Fate.

"Oh, you fool, you fool!" she exclaimed bitterly. "Why did you want to take that corner on two wheels when everything depended on your tyres?"

Despairingly she routed out the jack from under a seat. She knew how to change a wheel, but it would be a slow job. Then came a joyous sound. Far away, from the Exeter direction, the rhythmic purr of a powerful twin-cylinder motor-cycle burst upon the silence of the summer night. Three minutes later a young man on an 8-h.p. Peerless dashed into the range of Hilda's lamps.

She raised an imploring hand, then pointed to the wheel. He lifted the exhaust, trod on the foot-brake, and came to rest beside her.

"Oh," said Hilda, "please can you help change a wheel? I've had a burst, and it's so important. I *must* catch the midnight at Exeter!"

The young man glanced at a wrist-watch and shook his head.

"Nearly half-past-eleven now. Can't possibly do it. Give me the jack!" he exclaimed, the light of happiness in his eye. He had run over a hundred miles without touching a spanner, and was feeling very bored.

"There's another train at two o'clock," said Hilda with faint optimism.

The young man worked in silence for a few minutes. Then he straightened his back and fixed her with enthusiastic eyes.

"You go straight on to town by road," he advised solemnly. "You'll be pretty well at Devizes by the time the two o'clock starts from Exeter, and you can blind up to town on the Bath Road in no time. I did it once," pursued the young man, lapsing into a beatific smile, "in five hours on a six-horse twin Regina—exactly a hundred and seventeen miles. And, of course, a six-horse twin can't hop it like your car; with only one up, she ought to touch sixty."

He gloated reverently over the vehicle as he spoke.

The fighting gleam came into Hilda's grey eyes.

"You're right; she's touched fifty-five with me driving. You'd get the odd five extra, no doubt." (The young man worshipped Hilda.) "I'll do it if it shakes the gear-box out of her."

The owner of the 8-h.p. Peerless stepped across to his khaki mount and came back bringing gifts.

"Chocolate and a brandy-flask," he explained. "It's a long run—you'll need 'em. You mustn't stop for grub. Got plenty of petrol? Good! Shall I start her up? Oh, beg pardon! Self-starter, I see!"

Hilda hesitated, saw his eyes cloud, and accepted the offerings.

"Thanks most awfully!" She was in her place now, gripping the wheel. "You've been a brick. Where may I return the flask?"

"Oh, it doesn't really matter. Barringer my name is—H. F. Barringer, Royal Automobile Club. Good-bye, and good luck!"

The car whirred away. He stared after it for a moment.

"*What* a gorgeous blind!" he murmured. "How I should mop it if it were me!"

Then, with a sigh, he returned to the Peerless, stabbed the kick-starter scientifically and was gone.

Shortly before 12.20 a.m. a friendly policeman in the heart of deserted Exeter put Hilda safely on the Taunton Road. Not long after half-past one the car was tearing along on its way from Taunton to Devizes. Hilda's feverish anxiety had settled into cold determination. Her driving would have left Jehu, the son of Nimshi, jaundiced with envy, but it was scientifically done. The steep hills at Wells, Shepton Mallet, and Frome maddened her, but she kept herself in hand. At Devizes she filled up the tank, ate her sandwiches, drank her coffee and a little of H. F. Barringer's brandy, and then fled into the night on her final dash to London.

At ten-thirty, grimy, weary, and breakfastless she brought the car to a standstill outside the entrance of Pius Inn, where Rudolf had a flat.

The astonished hall-porter, the staring lift-attendant left her unmoved. The mirror in the lift showed her a pale face streaked

A young man on an 8-h.p. Peerless dashed into the range of Hilda's lamps. She raised an imploring hand, then pointed to the wheel. He lifted the exhaust, trod on the foot-brake, and came to rest beside her.

with dust, and dark-ringed eyes half-closed from fatigue. She did not care a straw.

Rudolf's man-servant answered her ring. He showed her into a library-smoke-room, decorated with weapons and jetsam from half-a-dozen campaigns. The door opened and Rudolf stood before her.

"Hilda!" he exclaimed. "My God, what's happened? You look absolutely dead—and I left you in Devonshire, last night, and——"

He stopped, utterly at a loss. Hilda propped herself on the arm of a big, comfortable chair and smiled faintly.

"I—wanted to catch the midnight from Exeter as well," she said, in curiously clear, even tones. "I burst a tyre on the way, and so I missed the train and came up by road. You see—I made a mistake last night. I can't do without you."

The silence in the quaint, cosmopolitan room was painful. The woman, tall, proud, beautiful had flung her pride to the winds, and watched herself do it with rather cynical bitterness. She was very tired.

The man's heart leapt within him. A second ago the world had not been wide enough in which to lose his eternal sorrow. Now it was not large enough to hold his joy.

Very gently he slid an arm behind her head, lifted her face to his, and kissed the quivering mouth. They said not a word, but over Hilda's fretted spirit stole peace, not altogether of God, but which passed all understanding.

Two hours later she stood in her own flat in Sloane Street watching Cooper, the inestimable maid, pack for a honeymoon trip to all the empires of the East. She and Rudolf were to be married at two-thirty. At four the boat sailed.

In the midst of these things a visitor arrived. Too happy to feel any annoyance Hilda went to meet him in her blue, white, and purple drawing-room, where so many things had happened, and nothing remarkable would ever happen again.

The visitor turned as she entered. His perfectly cut morning-dress could not disguise the classic lines of Marcellus the Stranger.

He bowed very gravely and with a touch of divine humility.

"I do not suppose," he began, and the beautiful voice held a note of sadness, "that you wish to see me again, but I have felt it necessary to ask your pardon for what occurred when you so graciously danced for us. I have no excuse to offer on behalf of myself; your friend, Mr. Merion, had every justification. As a consequence I have discontinued my work, and I leave England shortly for a certain monastery in the Himalayas where there will be opportunity for meditation. I should like to have your forgiveness before I go. If there is anything I can do to make amends please tell me."

It was Hilda's wedding-day, and on a girl's wedding-day her heart is touched easily. She held out her hand.

"Of course I forgive you," she exclaimed. "And don't let us say any more about it, because this is a very joyful occasion. Mr. Merion—Sir Rudolf Merion—and I are being married this afternoon. Please congratulate me."

The strange mixture of sincerity and charlatanry who called himself Marcellus grasped her extended hand in congratulation.

"And oh!" added Hilda, "seeing it's an absolutely quiet wedding, and there won't be a soul there, do come and be a witness. It's at St. Etheldreda's at half-past two. Please say you will!"

Still with his rare smile and gentle dignity, Marcellus promised.

V.

Late that afternoon Sir Rudolf Merion and his wife stood on the after part of the promenade deck as the P. and O. liner *Mesopotamia* raced down Channel. They watched the cliffs of England merge into a grey blue to starboard; on Hilda's left hand glittered a plain gold ring, bright as the gold a summer afternoon sun splashed on the little, giggling waves that humbugged round the stately *Mesopotamia*.

"This is the wrong end of the boat for us," said Rudolf suddenly. "Let's go for'ard!"

So for'ard they went, picking their way past donkey-engine men, and deck-hands battening down a hatch, to the very bows, and looked over to watch the knife-edge smiting a pathway through the blue-green waste.

A smile of utter content spread over Rudolf's face. One brown hand rested on Hilda's shoulder, the other gripped the spray-moist bulwark. His approving eye took in his woman, the unending track ahead, and the ship.

"Yes!" he said softly:

"Her plates are scarred by the sun, dear lass,
And her ropes are taunt with the dew,
For we're booming down on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,
We're sagging south on the Long Trail—the trail that is always new."

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The first sixty pictures appeared in the "Royal Magazine" for July, August, September, October, and November. Copies may be obtained through any newsagent for 4½d. each, or the five numbers will be sent post free for 2s. from the Publisher, "Royal Magazine," 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

ON the following page you will find a set of twelve pictures representing the names of railway stations which have been selected by the Editor, and further sets of pictures will appear monthly in THE ROYAL MAGAZINE. These prizes are offered to the readers who discover the names of the railway stations represented under the conditions below.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Competitors are required to write clearly in ink beneath each picture the name of the station they believe it represents, fill in their names and addresses in the space provided, cut out the page, and keep it until further instructions appear in THE ROYAL MAGAZINE.

First look at the example. You will see that the picture shows a dart and a mouth. The correct answer is DARTMOUTH.

EXAMPLE:

DARTMOUTH.

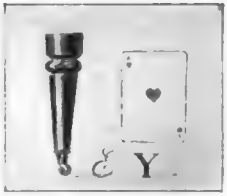
READ THESE CONDITIONS CAREFULLY.

1. Write the name of each station clearly in ink. One name only is allowed under each picture.
2. No alterations may be made in the names. If you have made a mistake, cross out the word and write it afresh. When you have filled up your list cut it out and keep it till we tell you what to do with it.
3. Competitors may send in as many complete series of pictures as they please, but each complete series will be judged independently. Sets must be fastened together in the top left-hand corner.
4. The prize of £500 will be paid to the competitor from whom the Editor receives a complete series of pictures with all the names correct of the actual stations as represented. If no competitor sends in a correct list the prize of £500 will go to the sender of the most nearly correct list. In the event of ties the prizes will be divided.
5. The Editor of the ROYAL will not be responsible for the loss or non-delivery of any attempt, and proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of receipt or delivery.
6. No member of the staff of the ROYAL MAGAZINE may enter for this competition.
7. Only the names of railway stations found in Pearson's List of Railway Stations will be admitted. This list is obtainable for 3d. through any newsagent or book-stall, or it will be sent post free for three penny stamps by The Publisher, Room 24, THE ROYAL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.
8. Competitors must agree to abide by these conditions, and the Editor's decision is in every respect final.

SEVENTH SET OF PICTURE PUZZLES (Nos. 61–72).

61. ....

62. ... .



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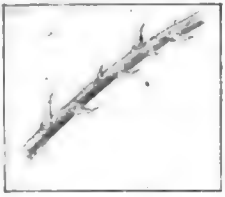

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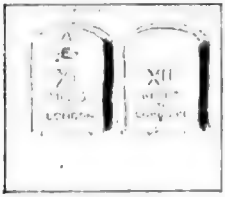

67. ... ...

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NAME ... ...

UNDER FIRE

By Edgar Wallace.

In the following article Mr. Edgar Wallace gives a graphic picture of the feelings experienced by the man who is under fire for the first time. Mr. Wallace has served in the Army himself, and his account of what happens in the firing line is authentic and well worth reading.

The man on the extreme right of the line fidgetted uneasily. He looked round with a frown to the corporal a little behind and saw me. I wore the red cross brassard over my civilian jacket. This he saw, and wriggled uncomfortably.

"There ought to be somebody on the right here," he grumbled. "Bit too conspicuous bein' on the extreme right. . . ."

He had never been under fire before, so his perturbation was natural. It is much easier to fight shoulder to shoulder than in extended order; it is even easier to fight in extended order, if you have a man on either side of you.

I told him to sit down—the other men of the line were sprawling at ease, waiting for the word to advance.

"How does it feel?" he asked.

"Rotten," said I truthfully, "but only for a minute or so."

"When are they going to begin?" he demanded, and scowled at the blue line of hills ahead bathed in a white hot flood of sunshine.

Far away to the right the cavalry was moving forward. They went ahead very slowly, as though uncertain of their direction. They moved to the right, and halted—then they went on again, still slowly, reluctantly, and finally disappeared in a fold of the yellow ground.

"Waiting for the guns," I said, and looked behind.

Yes, there they were, four batteries in four straight lines stretching backward. Now they were moving left and right, and presently when they touched suitable ground they would deploy.

Out of the blue hills ahead, as though from some rent of a crater, drifted a long wisp of white smoke.

"Ladies and gentlemen." The voice, strident and clear, was the voice of a soldier squatting on the ground, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands. "Ladies and gentlemen, we are just about to begin. Come-and-see-the-big-guns-of-the-enemy——"

"Fall in!"

The line came to its feet.

"*Whoom—m—m—!*"

Like a growl of thunder came the report of the gun on the hill. Over to the right, where the cavalry had disappeared, a big fountain of earth leapt straight into the air, another wisp of smoke from the hill, another and another, and even in the sunlight you saw the quick lick of flame.

"Duck, ye devils!"

A man on the left gives the warning, and as the new men obey him a roar of laughter sweeps along the line. A great joke to see the new men duck their heads as, with a roar like that of a train passing through a station, something flies overhead and buries itself in the soft earth to the rear of the line.

"*Phew!*"

The man on the right wipes his forehead with the back of his hand, and looks back curiously at the place where the shell struck.

"Nice thing—ain't it?" he asks in a tone

of complaint and despair, "bein' hit by a thing like that—*phew!*"

"*Pang!*"

Our guns are in action behind us—and there go the cavalry—far, far to the right—slow no longer, but sweeping swiftly forward to their invisible goal. All the sides of the blue hills are hazy with smoke now.

"*Pang! Pang! Pang!*"

Our guns are going furiously. Little puffs of white smoke hang over the hill ahead; you hear the echo-like sound of exploding shrapnel.

"'S'awful, ain't it?"

The man on the right is changing his attitude. His voice has lost the note of terror, and there has come a hint of admiring interest. Even in his "'S'awful," he would not have it less awful for worlds. The shock has passed, he has experienced his worst sensation, and is now blooded to war.

"How long are they going to keep us here?" he asks, and you know that if he wants to move it is forward. The whine of shells overhead is incessant, but presently you detect a difference of sound.

"*Crash!*"

The shrapnel now, high-pitched, perfectly timed, and scattering as well-behaved shrapnel should do. It patters on the ground like rain, and men edge to the left and right instinctively.

"Line will advance—keep your distance—plenty of time, my lads."

A red-faced lieutenant, obviously ablaze with excitement, nurses his platoon, walking ahead of them, now walking backward like a Salvation Army captain, now throwing his words across his shoulder. He is young and without experience, but he is obsessed with the sense of his responsibilities.

"Keep your lines—nothing to worry about—march on the centre——"

A piping voice from the ranks arrests him.

"Beg pardon, sir — your bootlace is untied."

A ripple of quiet laughter, a broad grin on the face of the major commanding the company, and the red-faced officer stoops,

—behind them. Six—seven—eight shells; then the enemy get the range. A man slips forward and goes sprawling to the earth with outstretched hands.

fumbling at his lace, and the line passes him. He is back soon, running to overtake them.

The shrapnel is bursting behind them. Six—seven—eight shells; then the enemy get the range. A man slips forward and goes sprawling to the earth with outstretched hands. The man at his right hesitates, and looks down at the silent, bleeding figure.

"Leave that man!"

The major swings round and roars the order:

"Leave him, confound you—leave him!"

So they leave him on the ground for the Royal Army Medical Corps, which will be working up from the rear.

Onward, onward, slowly, slowly, but always onward. Over gentle rises of ground where men crouch low as they walk, down deep hollows, and up the slope on the other side.

The skirmishing line is under rifle fire now. It whistles and whiffles about them; it sends the dust spirting up at their feet.

"Take cover in that donga—double!"

Now they are running swiftly to the first line of cover. Men go down here and there, but the man on the right doesn't seem to care. He is full of eager excitement, swings ahead of the line, and is gruffly checked by his officer.

They make the cover and crouch, panting and chuckling.

"Six hundred yards—commence firing!"

Up till now they haven't fired a shot. But now the well-oiled bolts are clicking all along the line, and the yellow cartridges are tinkling to the chamber.

"Bang—bang!"

At first lazily, and then in a fury of rattling sound, the rifles are going off.

"Aim steadily! That streak of yellow ahead is the trench! Steady, now—don't waste ammunition! What the devil are you firing at, Jackson—the moon?"

The shrapnel has the range again, and is bursting accurately over the cover.

"Line will advance—double!"

Out of the donga they scramble, a thousand yellow coats, and fly as fast as legs can carry across the bare patch of ground which separates them from the enemy. A whistle shrills, and obediently the thousand sinks to earth, taking what cover they can. More whistles — the extended line is closing stealthily on the centre. Another rush forward—again the whistle, then—

"Fix bayonets!"

How they rattle, those bayonets, how they "snick" down to groove and catch!

You can see the trenches plainly, you can

feel the men in them. The air is all shrill sound, and the bursting shrapnel overhead is a ceaseless clatter.

"Winchesters!"

It is the wild, exultant cry of the colonel—the only man who may address the regiment by its title.

"Winchesters, follow me—charge!"

Up they leap, a savage, glittering line.

With one wild yell—a throaty and roaring yell like a harsh and sustained "Ahr-r-r!"—the line breaks into a jog-trot run. Men spin round and fall, men sink limply like tired children, men swear at their comrades who get in the way, but the line, as a coherent, terrible force, drives forward to the end of the trenches, and the bayonets rise and fall. . . .

"Signalman!"

The colonel shakes his bleeding hand and blinks round for his man, and the corporal, with his swung tripod, fixes its three legs into the earth and adjusts his mirror.

"Heliograph to the general: 'Taken first line of the trenches. Enemy is now retiring on second line.'"

The man on the right, balancing his rifle, turns and smiles.

"I hope we're going to take the second line," he says. "How did I feel under fire? Fine! I forgot all about everything, but what I forgot first was—that I was under fire!"

That is always the way.

THE MODERN PHILTRE.

In the dim and distant ages
Ere the motor-'bus was born,
When a witch could get good wages
By assisting the lovelorn,
From a hag I would have taken
(Having paid her really well)
Something subtle to awaken
Your affection, Christobel.

Ah, you'd soon have got the notion
I was loveable indeed,
When I slipped a cunning potion
In your beaker full of mead.
Or, grown desperate at being
Snubbed whene'er I crossed your path,
Bribed your handmaid into seeing
That you tried it in your bath.

But those days are gone for ever.
Though I searched till I was grey,
My most diligent endeavour
Would not find such things to-day.
So, since magic means to bend you
Will not serve me, I select
Scents and chocolates to send you—
Will they have the same effect?

Theta.

SERGEANT BREE.

A Story of Belgian Courage.

By C. Randolph Lichfield.

I.

Out of the smoke of cannon and the clouds of dust thrown up behind the Belgian lines near Gelbrasse by a thousand feet and ten thousand ounces of deadly lead, two men emerged, wet with the sweat of battle and dusky with its grime, and halted in the doorway of the ruined cottage.

"This is the man, General," announced the taller of the two, saluting, and, as he spoke, the little knot of officers gathered around the table in the middle of the kitchen, opened out and looked at him sharply. "This is Sergeant Bree."

The grey-moustached General set his hands on the table, and, after pausing for a moment while he studied Sergeant Bree's immobile face, drew himself to his feet.

The sergeant was a short, wiry man about thirty years old. His tanned face, notwithstanding its immobility, was cast in an emotional mould, and its firmness was indicative of strength of character. He was the sort of man to face danger, not because he could not imagine or appreciate it, but because it was present to be faced. Though a look of dread lurked in them, his large brown eyes were resolute, and if his lips trembled as he stood in the doorway awaiting the order his captain had given him to expect, it was not because he feared for himself. He was just as brave as any man could be who is a husband and father.

"This despatch is for X——," said the General, picking up an envelope from the table. Sergeant Bree saluted. "Deliver it with all speed. Be on the look out for roving bodies of the enemy's cavalry. The wires are down, which proves they are about. If you see anything of them——"

"Destroy it—eat it!" exclaimed the sergeant, forgetting himself in his eagerness to be gone.

"No, no," replied the General, his steel-grey eyes twinkling quickly, "though perhaps you'd find it easier to digest than they. No, the necessity is simply that it be delivered. Therefore, you must avoid the enemy, even if you have to go twenty, thirty miles out of your way. But with good luck you ought to be in X—— within two hours. Time is not of so much importance, however. Go with all speed you can, but go with certainty."

Saluting, the sergeant took the despatch and tucked it into his boot.

"Shall I keep to the main road?" he inquired thoughtfully.

"*Mon Dieu!* go by whatever route or means chance may direct, so long as you reach the town safely. Is your cycle ready in good order—petrol and the rest of it?"

"It is quite ready, my General."

"Then go, and may good luck attend you."

Again saluting, Sergeant Bree turned on his heels and stepped out into the sunlight of the hot afternoon.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he said softly between his teeth, flapping his arms expressively as he made to where his dusty motor-cycle stood, "to pass within ten miles of my poor Marie and little Paul and not know if he lives! And the enemy somewhere back on our line. *Mon Dieu!* they may be in my little cot at this moment!"

He shook his clenched fist towards the riot of battle as he got astride his machine and began to push it off along the lane. Then the little engine, with its quick, hard cough, ran him off his feet and carried him away between the lines of dead and wounded, the wreckage of the fight. And soon the dreadful din of the fray began to sink below the hush of the distance, and the smiling, unstained countryside to open its harvest-filled heart to him, an entrancing vision of sweet peacefulness and unostentatious prosperity.

How could he look upon such scenes as these he loved and think of war, the savagely passionate purpose and fury of titanic hosts, and not weep in his fearless heart? War had called him from his peaceful cot, anxious wife and stricken child, to face possible death and leave them to await

possible disaster. And now it sent him like a flaming arrow flying past them. Though he must think of them in the direst need of help, perhaps picture the dreaded Uhlans hammering at their door while they shrank into the farthest corner of the cottage, yet he must pass them by and leave them far behind. . . .

He sped through little towns, and flew through empty hamlets, but seldom seeing even the solitary figure of an aged man or frightened woman peering beneath a shading hand in the direction whence the sounds of battle drifted. On, on ever, on the look-out for the roving Uhlans, and only seeing them in his mind's eye hammering at his cottage door. Alone!—his wife and child alone, and Uhlans hammering at their door! On, on! Another league, and he would be past the turning that was the way to them—he would have left them. The very thought that Uhlans might be at their door, that they were calling him in the frenzy of despair, ordered him on. He had his rifle slung upon his back, but though the use of it might save his wife from madness and his child from death, he must keep on the road to X——.

His orders were explicit; he must avoid the enemy. Though a woman's reason and a child's life might depend upon his doing so, that was his duty. On and on to X—— so long as the way was clear, though the throbbing of his engine sounded like the beating of rifle-butts and sword-hilts on his door, and the rushing air had the shrill, harsh note of a woman's scream—on, on, so long as the way was clear.

Presently, as he sped over the road towards that enticing turning to the left which only his heart might take, his roving eyes lit upon something along the winding lane to his right, and he raised his head involuntarily.

A mile away, perhaps, where the lane bent broadly over a slight hill, a man perched on the top of a telegraph post was plainly visible against the sky.

Bree slowed down to a standstill, and brought out his field-glasses. His thoughts were of his wife and child, and not doubting that the man so near to them was an enemy, his fingers fumbled agitatedly. When at length he had the glasses sighted, the man was half way down the post, and riding forward along the lane, as though for very life, were perhaps a dozen mounted men.

Bree thrust his glasses away in haste, and setting his teeth in an ugly grin, began to foot his cycle for a start. But the engine refused.

He sprang off, and shoved his cycle forward at a run—thirty, forty, fifty yards, but the engine still refused. For a moment he stood, glancing over it in bewilderment, then shoved it off again; suddenly it shook with a loud double report, and, as he leapt astride the saddle, it moved off swiftly down the road.

It had been only a brief delay, but it made his position nearly desperate. Fast as horses could go the Uhlans were racing along to intercept him where the lane branched off from the road, a full half-mile away. It was obvious that they could not reach the road in time to bar his way, but one of a dozen shots might get him as he rushed past the end of the lane or the riders raced out after him.

He saw their bobbing heads as the cracking pace at which they rode to head him off strung them out in a line, with the man who had cut the telegraph wires following far behind. He saw them unsling their carbines and drop their horses' bridles, and he bent low over his machine. Nearer and nearer they drew together, and a shot rang out and sang shrilly over his head as the Uhlans seemed to realise he must pass before they gained the road. In another moment he saw them along the vista of the lane, and he felt the burning bite of a bullet in his side even before he heard the rattle of half-a-dozen rifles.

But now he was past them, speeding away from them, and the spirit of triumph leapt up in him, so that, looking back to see them turn out of the lane and wheel in hot pursuit, he snatched off his *képi* and waved it in defiance.

They answered with a rattling fire, and he jumped in the saddle of his cycle as a burning bullet bit him in the leg.

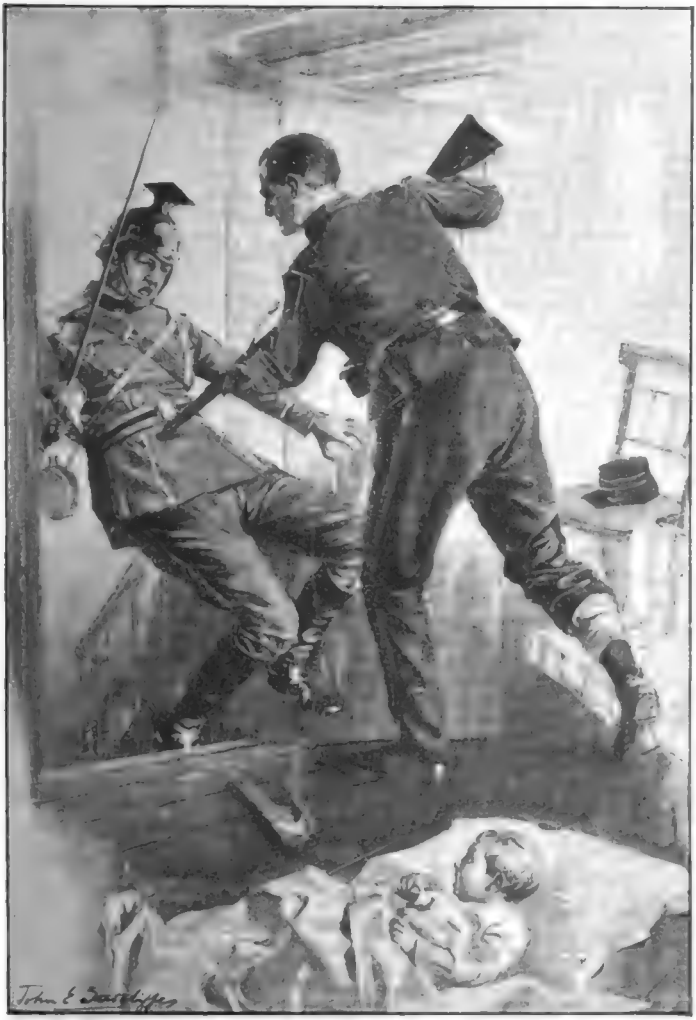
"*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!*" he said faintly, his white lips straining in a smile of distress as the intensity of the pain began to abate, "but that was horrible."

Again and again he heard the rattle of their rifles, but they fell away, far, far behind.

He felt horribly faint, sick and faint, and he knew it was no fault of his machine that it kept swerving to one side or other of the road, but that he was losing his control over it.

Desperately he braced himself with all his strength of will, but the effort left him feeling weaker, and he realised that he could not possibly control his machine long enough to get to X——. Yet must the despatch be delivered! How? To whom would he dare intrust it?

To nobody but his wife, forsooth!—she



Another Uhlan came rushing up, firing wildly. Bree rose and stabbed him in the stomach with the muzzle of his rifle, and, gasping, the Uhlan fell back. [Page 204, col. 2.]

who was as himself in love of country, sense of honour, devotion to duty. Not half-a-mile ahead he could see the lane that would lead him to her, if he could get so far. She would carry the despatch to X——, even though she might have to tramp the long twelve miles, while he would take her place beside their treasured boy. She would be safer and safer every mile she made towards the city, for the roving Uhlans were behind.

He slowed down as he approached the turning of the lane, yet took it so giddily that he shot into the deep ditch at the side of the road, and fell, flung forward with his machine across his legs. Practically stunned he lay for a minute or two, deliciously indifferent to what had happened and could ever happen.

Pain in his leg and side were the first sensations of his waking consciousness, and gave him to think of his position. Then he rose up, grateful to find himself able to stand erect and his machine undamaged. But he was weak, and so faint and dizzy that he did not dare to mount again at once.

Laboured, leaning low over the handle-bars, and limping, he pushed the cycle on before him for about a quarter-of-a-mile, then, after a few stumbling attempts, he got into the saddle again, and with his teeth set and his heavy eyes on the centre of the lane he sped forward, summoning his whole strength to outlast the journey.

And presently, through the lashes of his half-closed eyes, he saw the hot sunlight gleaming on the white walls of his cottage ahead of him, and he laughed weakly, wearily.

Forward he rushed, no thought now in his mind of Uhlans hammering at his door, his wife cringing into a far corner hugging the baby to her heaving breast. The cottage stood serenely in the softening summer sunlight, the focal point of a wide stretch of peacefulness, unstained, unruffled by the bloody hand of war.

He slowed down eagerly, and scramb'ed off his cycle at his door.

"Marie!" he called in a strangled voice.

She threw the door wide as he reached it, and he fell into her outflung arms. Just for an instant he looked into the fair face, flushed with joyous excitement, then sank his heavy head upon her breast and laughed wearily, with tears in his voice.

"Paul!" she cried softly, tightening her hold upon him as, his weak knees sagging, she felt his deadly weight. "*Mon Dieu!* you are ill? You are injured?"

"Yes, yes," he answered. "I am hit. And I have a despatch for X——, Marie. You must deliver it. For me it is impossible."

II.

Soon she was gone. She had bathed and dressed his burning wounds, and he leant in the doorway watching her as she strode across the open fields for the first stage of her journey. She had gone bravely, with tears in her eyes, it is true, for she was leaving him looking almost on the point of death through loss of blood, and their child in the room above was still very ill. The instinct of wife and mother tore at her heart-strings, but she went with a proud smile on her lips, and her step was firm with courage and resolution.

Soon she was out of sight, and Bree turned into the cottage, and shut and locked the door. He was assured she would not fail, and believed she was now far enough away to be safe from Uhlans. Farther on she might be picked up by some conveyance taking belated fugitives to the city. But here in the isolated little cottage, whose white walls made it visible from many distant points around, bound down by the ties of motherhood to her sick child, she had been truly in peril.

He took a crust of bread and a cup of water which she had set upon the table for him, and, steadying himself first with one shoulder against a wall and then the other, he climbed the steep and narrow staircase to the darkened bedroom where his undreaming child slept. Slowly he went, leaning against a wall, his head hanging heavily, and he sank down upon a padded chest beside the big bed wherein the little one lay, just his tousled head and a wee, limp hand dimly visible among the bedclothes.

"I need not have worried so," Bree muttered. "Marie was safe and he was better. Praise the good God I only came this way to do my duty."

He sat and sipped the water gratefully, and munched a little of the bread. Then he laid his head and shoulders upon the bed and rested, letting his weakness steal soothingly over him.

Perhaps he slept, but a little out-thrown hand aroused him, striking him on his head. He raised himself, and caught the hand and kissed it tenderly. But the child still slept.

The narrow rift of sunlight that had lain across the foot of the bed had shifted now across to the washing-stand, marking the flight of time, and, wondering how the fighting

("SERGEANT BREE" continued overleaf.)

Robust Health

Is built principally upon the sturdy foundation of **Right Food.**

Purity first—then nutrition to meet the law of daily waste and repair of body, brain and nerve cells. But,—the food must contain all the essential elements, or there cannot be robust health.

Injurious preservatives are not permitted by the pure food laws, but the law does not prohibit millers from leaving out of some kinds of flour certain parts of the wheat berry which contain vital mineral salts—grown in the grains by Nature—and necessary for the normal balance of body, brain and nerves.

This lack in daily food is responsible for many common ailments.

Grape-Nuts

made of whole wheat and malted barley, meets every requirement.

It has delicious taste and retains in perfect balance all the nutrition of the grains, including the mineral salts—thus admirably supplying what many foods lack.

For robust health try **Grape-Nuts.**—*"There's a Reason."*

1st Prize £100

2nd Prize £50

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5 Prizes of £10

25 Prizes of £5

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750 Prizes of 10/-

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The LAST DAY

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30,

is the last day on which we can accept your White Squares for a Free Quaker Oats Cooker and the Cash Prize Competition.

Don't waste White Squares—send them all—they will be useless after November 30th.

How you obtain your Free Cooker

On receipt of 60 White Squares from Quaker Oats packets, not later than Nov. 30th, 1914, we will send a Quaker Oats Cooker, carriage paid, to any address in the United Kingdom.

The portion of the Quaker Oats Packet called the "White Square" looks like this, and may be cut from the front of every Quaker Oats Packet. The 60 White Squares refer to those from the large packet, but 2 squares from 3d. packets, or 6 from 1d. packets, equal 1 from large packet.

IMPORTANT.—If you have not saved the 60 White Squares required for a Cooker, send in all you have saved, together with a halfpenny for every White Square less than 60. Thus, if you have only 36 White Squares, send with them one shilling (stamps or postal order).

Only one Cooker can be sent to the same family—but the White Squares sent for a Cooker and all additional Squares will count for you in

The Competition for £1,575 in Cash

£100 will be sent to the competitor from whom we receive by Monday, November 30th (1914) the largest number of White Squares. £50 will be sent to the one from whom we receive the next largest number, and there are 3,131 other cash prizes. Remember to send in ALL your White Squares—they will be useless after November 30th.

(Cheques will be sent to the Prize Winners about December 15th, 1914).

To prevent Loss please be sure that—

The parcel is fully post-paid, your name and address enclosed, and addressed to—QUAKER OATS, LTD., 11, Finsbury Sq., London, E.C.

An announcement as to the Prize Winners, with Accountant's Certificate, will appear in the "Daily Mirror" and "Daily Sketch" of December 23rd next.

Quaker Oats

Nov. 1914.

went, Bree pulled himself to his feet, and, stealing to the window, peeped out into the golden glamour of the sinking sun. It dazzled him, and he looked back quickly into the gloomy room, blinking to ease his eyes. But he saw the picture still—the vision of the fruitful country in the gorgeous hush of the sweet, peaceful evening. . . .

He looked again with stronger eyes, and something moving in the stillness drew his attention to the winding lane to his right.

Uhlans!

He dropped the blind and drew back unsteadily, for the moment bewildered by the unexpectedness, the hideous incongruity of their appearance between God's gilded fields. To his mind they typified death, destruction, and dishonour, and here they came at a careless canter into the hush and glamour of the August evening—death, destruction, and dishonour! . . . . Death, perhaps, and destruction, but dishonour—no!

"Praise God!" he exclaimed in a harsh whisper. "Praise God!"

He wheeled away from the window, and, groping his way, hobbled from the room and down to the kitchen. He bolted the door and shuttered the window; then, with his rifle and his cartridge pouch, he climbed back to the bedroom.

Death, perhaps, and destruction also, but dishonour—no! Yet had their shots not hit and bled him, he would have been in X—— now, and Marie—beautiful and defenceless—*here* with her wailing child.

He staggered across to the window, and thrusting aside the blind, crouched down.

They were coming, they were surely coming. He would kill them if he could. The leading man was pointing to the cottage.

Bree rested his rifle on the window-ledge, and putting the blind behind his head, took careful aim and fired.

The leader of the twelve Uhlans flung up his arms, and, as his startled horse plunged, toppled from the saddle among the stamping hoofs of the other horses as, being suddenly checked, they wheeled.

For a moment the little band was thrown into confusion, evidently doubting for the nonce whence the shot had come. Sergeant Bree seized the chance to speed two bullets into their midst, and one shot emptied another saddle

But thus he was betrayed. In an instant half-a-dozen Uhlans were urging their horses to a gallop, eager to wreak vengeance. Of the other three, two had dismounted and were bent over their fallen comrades, while the third had wheeled in pursuit of a riderless horse that was cantering jauntily into the fields. Now he swung back, and the two dismounted men sprang into the saddle again.

Meantime the firing in the room, that shook the very roof, had roused the sleeping child, who began to cry distressfully. Its voice wrung Sergeant Bree's heart.

"Ah bah!" he exclaimed through his set teeth, as he aimed at the onrushing Uhlans. "You do not understand, *mon petit*. I am a soldier. If they take me, I must leave you, if they do not put you to the sword!"

Again he fired, and a horse in the midst of the others stumbled and its rider fell, checking those behind. Bree fired a fifth shot quickly, but missed. Nevertheless, as he hurriedly loaded his rifle again, he bared his teeth in a grim smile of satisfaction, for his weakness notwithstanding, his shooting was quite good. Three Uhlans of the twelve lay sprawling on the road, and not a shot had been returned.

He yet had time to fire twice before the men arrived at the cottage, and one shot shattered a Uhlan's right arm, and the other brought down another's horse.

"Eight!" hissed Bree triumphantly, and ducked below the window-ledge as a couple of shots rang out on the road and whistled across the room. "Only eight! Lie still, *mon petit*, lie still. Listen!"

From below came a confusion of sounds—the trampling of hoofs, the shuffling of feet, the clatter of arms, the snorting of excited horses that smelt blood, and angry oaths of men who thirsted for it. And close at hand his little son wailed piteously.

Very cautiously Bree raised his eyes above the level of the window ledge and pushed aside the blind. Almost at once a shot rang out and whistled over his head. At the same moment there came from below the thunder of heavy knocking upon the cottage door, much as he had fancied it while he sped along the road to X——.

Eight against one, but the one was an armed man, not a beautiful and defenceless woman. Hurrah, how chance had cheated them! Eight against one and a baby—a wounded man and a sick child, but both men.

He raised himself again, and, regardless of being seen, thrust aside the little blind with the barrel of his rifle and fired down upon the men battering in his door—once, twice, thrice in rapid succession, fast as he could fire, then ducked again.

"Hush, hush!" he cried distractedly to the child, who now screamed in terror. "You torture me! You break my heart! Peace, peace! Just let me kill them, little one, and I will comfort you! Silence! I want to hear! What are they doing, eh? But listen!"

For the moment the battering of the door had ceased—that loud, infernal hammering. But the oaths had not; they were fiercer, louder, and more menacing than before. If words could blast, then Bree, his home and child had been an ash-heap.

Bree found himself trembling. It was from excitement, and not fear, he knew, but it was just as dangerous. He needed to be doing, at any risk; inactive, he must lose his nerve.

He reached up and tore away the blind. For an instant he waited for shots. They did not come, and he popped up his head to glance out for an instant, then ducked again.

Three men lay prone upon the road, the others were invisible. Three men below and three still sprawled along the lane made six.

Now, it was six to one.

He rose and hobbled to the bed, and shook the screaming child gently.

"Oh, hush, *mon petit Paul*," he cried softly. "Only six now. Be still, be silent. Oh, be brave."

He turned about, and looked around him for anything with which he could breach the walls. But there was nothing.

Again came the attack upon the door, more deafening than before. But he was glad to hear it. He could prepare to meet what he knew to be coming.

He swept the clothes from off the bed, and, heaping them upon the floor, hastily laid the child upon them. Then he folded up the mattress, and carrying it with difficulty, set it in the doorway. Next he tried to move the chest of drawers, but his strength was spent, and the cottage door was giving; he could hear it cracking—splintering. And more than that, he heard strange sounds behind him.

Swinging round as he snatched up his rifle, he saw a hand folded upon the window-ledge in a tight clasp. Somebody was mounting—mounting on another's shoulders, perhaps, to fire in upon him through the window.

His rifle cracked as a sweating face, contorted in a hideous grin of physical effort, appeared above the ledge, and the face fell back, never to grin again.

"Five!" shouted Bree hoarsely, and turned back to the doorway.

Looking down the little stairway and across the kitchen he could see the splintered cottage door gaping above the lock. The top bolt had given way, though the lower one held, and the hinges still resisted. But the whole door was split vertically and breaking into fragments under the blows.

He let himself down upon his knees and pushed the muzzle of his rifle beneath the heaped mattress, then lay down full length to wait a chance to reduce his five antagonists to four.

"Peace, peace, little one," he kept calling to the screaming child, who lay kicking and struggling in the heap of bedclothes; and every now and then he threw an anxious look back towards the window.

It was just at the moment when, seeing a face through an aperture of the splintered door, he was on the point of firing, that something whizzed through the window behind him and fell upon the floor. It spoilt his aim, and, glancing round, he heard the rushing sound, smelt the sickening smell and saw the leaping flames of a burning torch of wood entwined with straw and soaked in petrol from his cycle-tank. It lay beside the mound of bedclothes, and the flames were even then stealing upon a cotton sheet.

He made a grab at it without rising, but his reach was short, and downstairs the door had fallen in with a sudden crash.

A roar of fierce triumph swept up to him as the five Uhlans plunged into the kitchen. He fired upon them as they reached the foot of the stairs. One Uhlan fell in a heap, another staggered away with a bullet buried in his shoulder.

It was the last shot in his rifle, and there was no time to reload. Bree scrambled upon one knee, reached the torch and thrust it into the bearded face of the Uhlan who leapt up the staircase to assail him. The Uhlan sprang back, throwing aside the man behind him with his outflung arms, and crashed down to the kitchen floor.

Now Bree saw a chance to reload. But the time was too brief, for through the smoke and flame and stench of the torch that lay upon the stairs another Uhlan came rushing up, firing wildly

Bree rose and stabbed him in the stomach with the muzzle of his rifle, and, gasping, the Uhlan fell back, stumbling, and missing his footing, collapsed heavily to the bottom of the stairs.

In a weak frenzy Bree reloaded his rifle.

["SERGEANT BREE" continued overleaf.]

No. 6133.

Handkerchiefs are a necessity—your friends will appreciate this gift for Xmas.

No. 6133.—Lady's fine linen embroidered initial Handkerchief about 12½in. square, with ¼in. hem. Embroidery 2in. Per doz. **5/11**

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A shot came up the smoke-filled staircase while he was doing so, and swept away the lobe of his left ear.

With a low scream he staggered against the wall on his right, and leant there for an instant, spent. But a passion of despair sprang up in him, and, drawing away from the wall, he sent a raking fire of five successive shots down into the kitchen.

The kick of his rifle as he fired the fifth shot, shook him off his feet. He fell helplessly, with his wounded leg bent under him, his arms flung out across the mounded mattress.

He was conscious of his utter helplessness, that a shot might end him or a sword-blade do so still more horribly, that his strangling child lay in a heap of smouldering bedclothes, but for the moment he could only lie and wait whatever might befall. . . .

It was an hour of horror, that moment he lay paralysed by weakness, and the very agony of it created in him a new, a superhuman strength. He seized it as salvation, and heaving himself to his hands and knees, looked down the staircase.

No face, no form showed through the leaping flames and rolling smoke that veiled the kitchen from his view. No shot, no sound—unless, perhaps, a groan.

He drew his rifle to him, and fixed his bayonet to it as he struggled to his feet, then, his lips trembling with a soundless prayer, he snatched the half-suffocated child from the smouldering bedclothes, and turned back to the stairs.

There the mounded mattress barred his way, but by prodding it with his bayonet he moved it sufficiently to get past, and holding his weapon ready to thrust, supporting himself with his left shoulder against the wall, he hobbled down the burning staircase.

Blinking and gasping for breath, he stepped upon a Uhlan who lay stretched at the foot of the stairs, and was flung aside against the kitchen wall. But no one opposed him, and through the smoke the way lay clear to him, through the open door into the sweet, cool air, the golden light, the peacefulness beyond.

He staggered out, and holding the child tightly to him with his left arm, stumbled to his knees.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he gulped, letting the child roll gently to the ground.

Out of the very earth, it seemed, a Uhlan rose before him. He came swinging a carbine in his left hand, for his right arm was shattered.

"Spare me!" pleaded Bree, trying to get to his feet. "Spare!—spare!"

The Uhlan swung his rifle up and fired with his one hand, but the shot went wide, and Bree got to his feet and ran the Uhlan through the body in one movement.

For a space he stood swaying like a reed in the wind, looking around him, expecting a fresh attack. But none was there who could attack him, and, turning back, he leant on the doorpost of his burning home, and looked into the smoke-filled kitchen.

Across the floor a wounded Uhlan was painfully dragging himself upon his stomach towards the door. Bree stumbled in to him, and, getting him by an arm, helped him out. Then he returned and examined the four others. Two of them were dead, but the other two only gravely wounded. He tried to drag them out, but because they could not help themselves he could not move them, His strength was as a little child's.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he groaned feebly, looking up at the spreading flames.

He hobbled out into the little garden to where a line of washing hung, a row of baby clothes, between a nail in the cottage wall and a post, to which five of the Uhlan's horses were hitched; and he cut down the line.

He was weeping from sheer exhaustion, weeping tearlessly as he returned to the kitchen, and he had to pause between each effort he made to lash the two wounded Uhlans together. That done, he carried the other end of the line out into the road and dropped it there, while he fetched one of the horses. Then he fastened the line to the saddle and dragged the two men from beneath the burning roof out into the open road.

He left them lashed together, and, drawing the horse after him, returned to where his child lay still, as though asleep or dead, though only comatose from grief and terror at what it had not understood.

Hitching the child up under his arm like a bundle, Bree backed the horse close up against the cottage fence so that it could not swerve away, and with great difficulty, after many attempts, he mounted. And, hunched in the saddle, his head rolling weakly, his pale lips parted and drawn in a smile of pain, he steered the horse on to the road for X——, turning his back upon his burning home and the roving party of twelve Uhlans, soon to find a grateful respite in the fond arms of his wife, who had fulfilled her purpose no less dutifully than he.

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MR. EDITOR —HIS PAGE.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

THE war is upon us, we all have relatives or friends fighting gallantly against the King's enemies, few of us do not feel the pinch of hard times, and everyone is preoccupied by the seriousness of an unparalleled situation. Yet, in spite of these things, I wish you all happiness and good luck during the finest Christmas in the history of the Empire, whose proud citizens we are, and all prosperity in a New Year teeming with magnificent possibilities.

TWO SPLENDID NEW SERIES.

In the January ROYAL commence two splendid new series of war stories. One is from the admirable pen of Mr. Louis Tracy, whose best known work, "The Final War," long ago achieved the distinction of becoming a classic. This series, entitled "Secret Service," deals in an enthralling fashion with those fascinating undercurrents of a great war, the work of enemy spies and those deputed to check and defeat their machinations.

Frankly, I am proud to have these stories in the ROYAL.

THE OTHER SERIES

is contributed by Mr. Edgar Wallace, whom I may call the Shakespeare of the British Army. For as Shakespeare put before us luring, breathless personalities of his day, so Mr. Wallace sets down Tommy Atkins on paper so that we can fairly hear the creak of his accoutrements, and sniff the acrid smell of cordite when he goes into action.

Mr. Wallace, then, will show us Nobby Clark at the front in the January ROYAL. If you have never heard of Nobby Clark, then you are unique in the annals of history. That is quite certain. Nobby Clark is the one and only, unequalled and not-to-be-duplicated Tommy Atkins. Get the January ROYAL, and renew your acquaintance with Nobby.

WAR BOOKS YOU SHOULD BUY.

A book which should be in everyone's hands just now is "First From the Front," a series of vivid sketches by Mr. Harold Ashton, who was a prisoner for some time at the French Headquarters of the Western Army, and spent a breathless week in the North Sea at the outbreak of the war. His experiences extend over the thrilling period when Paris was within an ace of investment to the time when the Western Army began its "enveloping" movement. The book sells at 2s. 6d., and is splendid value for the money.

Another book that deserves attention is "An Englishwoman's Adventures in the German Lines," written by Gladys Lloyd, and published at one shilling. Miss Lloyd, who was afterwards taken prisoner by the Germans and deported, draws a striking picture of the treatment meted out by the Germans to the Belgian villagers.

ALL ABOUT KITCHENER.

If you want really reliable and interesting information about one of the foremost personalities of the day, invest a shilling in "Lord Kitchener," an engrossing book with a foreword by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., which has just made its appearance.

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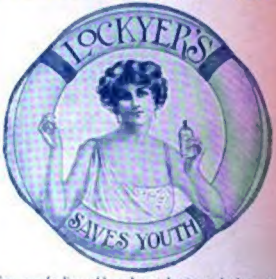

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